University of Alberta

Disruption in place attachment: Insights of young Aboriginal adults on the social and cultural impacts of industrial development in northern Alberta.

by

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Abstract

People living in the north have been and will continue to be affected by increasing exploration and exploitation of the region's natural resources. To understand the human impacts a qualitative approach and sense of place, place attachment, and disruption in place theories were used to analyze the experiences of young Aboriginal adults in a Dene Tha' community in northwestern Alberta. The major finding of this study was that the young people developed deep attachments to their place; however, environmental, social, and cultural changes have altered life here and as a consequence many of the young people no longer want to remain living in their community. The results suggest that the Dene Tha' are being gradually displaced and their homeland is becoming increasingly unable to sustain them or their culture. The findings also indicate that gradual environmental deterioration can lead to profound social and cultural changes that should be considered before land use decisions are made.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

OVERVIEW

Introduction

This project is a community-based collaborative research initiative involving the Dene Tha' First Nation in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta and University of Alberta researchers. Specifically, it seeks to understand the impacts of industrial development on the everyday lives of the Dene Tha' people living in Chateh Alberta, a First Nation community that has experienced decades of industrial activity. Employing qualitative research techniques this project uses an exploratory approach to examine and describe the environmental, social, and cultural changes that are occurring from the perspective of 20 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. In essence, this research is a sociological study of what happens to people when places are changed.

Background of Study

The Dene Tha' First Nation people speak Athapaskan (Bouchard, 2006) and their semi-nomadic ancestors lived in small family units throughout northwestern Alberta for over 10,000 years (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Miller, 2002). They have relied on hunting, trapping, and fishing and developed their cultural, social, and economic practices based on the availability of the natural resources in the boreal forest region (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000). The asserted Dene Tha' Traditional Territory covers the northwestern section of Alberta, the northeastern part of British Columbia, and the southern sections of the Northwest Territories (Bouchard, 2006; The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). After signing Treaty 8 in 1900, the Dene Tha' were allocated seven parcels

of land within their traditional territory as reserve or settlement areas (Bouchard, 2006), while maintaining their right to hunt, fish, and trap throughout their traditional land (Madill, 1986). In 1930, the responsibility for land use planning and management along with the rights to revenue from the region's natural resources outside the reserve areas was transferred to the Province of Alberta with the signing of the Natural Resources Transfer Act (NRTA) (Government of Canada, 1930).

The Dene Tha' First Nation maintains that when Dene Tha' ancestors adhered to the treaty with the Government of Canada, they did so with the understanding that they were agreeing to "share the land in peace" and not forfeiting their right to "assert ownership of the traditional lands" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 4). Today, however, many Dene Tha' people fear that they are losing their homeland, their livelihood, and their culture in the wake of the intensifying industrial development that is taking place in the north (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). *Industrial development* can be seen as a process that involves the use of natural resources for commercial benefit and includes primary industries such the fishing, fur, forestry, mining, oil and gas, as well as related activities. Despite growing public concern about the environmental impacts of the industrial activities in this region, little attention has been given to the social consequences of these effects (Ross, 2003). In addition, the quantitative data, such as the *Community Well-being Index* (CWB) that is collected to monitor changes in community well-being (Cooke, 2005), suggests that a paradoxical situation is occurring (McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004). Although there has been decades of

industrial development in northern Alberta, Aboriginal communities continue to suffer high levels of poverty and unemployment and have not experienced marked improvements in their social or economic conditions despite the increasing exploitation of the region's natural resources (Ross, 2003).

Victor Chonkolay, a Dene Tha' Elder and member of the Steering Committee for this project asks “Now you can not return to the old days, no, but where is the future?” (Steering Committee Minutes, July 16, 2007, p. 1). In the past young people could learn traditional ways and be self-reliant but “today the young people have nothing to do, many drop out [of school], [there is] no employment - no land to do anything with” (Steering Committee Minutes, July 16, 2007, p. 1). The Dene Tha' can no longer make a living from hunting and trapping alone, because wildlife has become scarce and the environment is damaged. The cost of living has increased, there are many more young people, and the unemployment rate is over 70 percent in Dene Tha' communities. These changes continue to affect the young people, in particular those living in the Dene Tha' community of Chateh which is surrounded by oil and gas and forestry activity (Steering Committee Minutes, July 16, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

People living in the north have been and will continue to be impacted by industrial development as exploration and exploitation of the region's natural resources intensifies. Furthermore, in the past Aboriginal people have largely been excluded from the resource planning process because they lack a voice and power within the political system (Buckley, 1993; Canada Royal Commission on

Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Williams, 2004). Unsurprisingly, much of the debate about resource management has focused on treaty rights and consultation issues while less attention has been given to how the everyday lives of First Nations people are altered by resource allocation and development decisions. Consequently, researchers and land use planners need to identify place-specific impacts, include the understandings of ordinary people in the debate, and ensure that further development does not negatively impact the well-being of communities located in areas where resource extraction is occurring.

How people react to change and are affected by it is determined by how they perceive it and there has been a lack of research focusing on the local or place-based perceptions of change (Csonka & Schweitzer, 2004). Moreover, the relationship between people and their place is intrinsically significant (Gieryn, 2000). As Fitzpatrick and LaGory (2000) have observed, place shapes the life chances of its inhabitants and

> [p]lace is a meaningful unit not simply because a population uses various places as the stage on which to carry out its behaviours and actions, but because the stage (or place) itself shapes these actions and experiences. We are who we are, and we experience what we do on a daily basis in part because of where we find ourselves. Our physical and mental health is a product of not only how we live but also where we live. (p. 12)

Place is more than a location, it involves human experiences, emotions, and meanings attached to the lived environment (Tuan, 1977). Changes to place, consequently, can have profound impacts on the wellbeing of individuals and the social fabric of communities (Fitzpatrick & LaGory, 2000; Gieryn, 2000; Werlen, 1993). This impact may be especially true for the Aboriginal people living in

Alberta's northern boreal forest, whose cultural, social, and economic systems, as Wetherell and Kmet (2000) point out, have historically been connected to the land through hunting, fishing, and trapping and are now experiencing dramatic alterations in their natural environment due to increasing industrial development.

Brown and Perkins (1992) suggest that changes to place create disruptions in the bonds that people develop with their place. *Disruptions in place attachment*, they argue, are often associated with catastrophic events such as man-made or natural disasters and forced relocations but they may also result from more gradual and prolonged deterioration of the natural environment caused by industrial development. Although other authors such as Erickson (1976, 1994) and Oliver-Smith (1986) have made similar observations, little research uses disruption in place attachment theory to examine the impacts of gradual environmental damage on First Nations people. By contrast, numerous studies regarding disruptions caused by involuntary relocation of Aboriginal people for industrial development purposes have been conducted (Loney, 1995; Waldram, 1988; Windsor & McVey, 2005). As well, much research has been completed on forced relocations due to environmental contamination that have occurred in places such as Grassy Narrows, Ontario (Usher. et al., 1979; Wheatley, 1997), and forced relocations resulting from administrative decisions such as the uprooting of the Innu in Davis Inlet, Labrador (Press, 1995). However, to date there have been few studies on disruptions in place attachment when relocation has not occurred. Furthermore, research is needed on the impacts experienced by particularly vulnerable groups within First Nation communities such as the youth and young

adults. Aboriginal children represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population; however, this significant portion of our society faces a number of serious challenges (Smylie & Adomako, 2009).

Almost one-third of Aboriginal children live in low-income families, a disproportionate number reside in crowded substandard housing, and many are without access to safe drinking water (Smylie & Adomako, 2009). The infant mortality rate for Aboriginal children in Canada is nearly double that of the non-Aboriginal population and they exhibit higher rates of accidental death and suicide. Smylie and Adomako (2009) argue that colonization is the root cause of the health problems and they suggest that "[g]overnment policies have supported the disruption of family networks, the forced dislocation of communities from traditional lands, and increased environmental degradation of natural resources due to industrial processes" (p. 19).

In addition to the health concerns, Aboriginal youth across Canada are "more likely than their non-Aboriginal peers to be victims of crime and also to be arrested and incarcerated" (Canada, 2009, n.p.). Overrepresentation in the prison system has been linked to increasing gang recruitment of at risk Aboriginal youth and young adults who have been "marginalized and isolated within our society" (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2006, p. 65). La Cava et al. (2004) have argued that this marginalization increases their vulnerability and youth engagement in the decision-making process is necessary to improve the quality of life of this whole generation. Conversely, Aboriginal youth have not had a voice within the political system in Canada or even within their communities (Alfred et al., 2007).

Surprisingly, few studies have examined how First Nation youth and young adults understand and experience their place, their communities, and their homeland in today's changing world. This study seeks to address these gaps by using sense of place and place attachment theory along with the disruption in place attachment framework (Brown & Perkins, 1992) and related research studies, to explore and analyze the experiences of young adults who are living in a region undergoing increasing industrial pressure.

Research Purpose, Objectives, and Questions

The purpose of this research is to further our understanding of the social and cultural impacts of industrial activities in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta through the experiences and understandings of a group of young adults living there. The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to explore how young adults in Chateh experience the place they live in and how they developed their sense of place; secondly, to identify their insights about the changes that are occurring in their environment and their community; and thirdly, to determine how these changes are impacting their lives and their future. The specific research questions being addressed are the following:

1. How did the young adults develop their sense of place and what does their place mean to them?
2. What transformations in people, place, and processes are they experiencing?
3. How are these transformations changing the way the young adults understand and experience their place and their future?

Significance and Contributions

It is anticipated that this research will provide useful documentation about the effects of industrial activities in northern Alberta. This information will help the Dene Tha' First Nation to understand the impacts being experienced by their young people and will assist them in future land use, community and regional planning, and management initiatives. The results may also serve as a benchmark for gauging the effectiveness of programs, services, and other community development measures. In addition, this research may identify opportunities for community development that may have been previously overlooked.

This research will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the impacts of industrial development by exploring how changes in the environment and land use policies translate into social and cultural impacts in Aboriginal communities. The local perspective will provide on-the-ground information about how these changes alter lives in a community and will add to our knowledge about the factors that should be considered when resource decisions are made. This study will further our understanding of the importance of place in the lives of First Nations people and the relationship between environmental change and their well-being. It will provide new knowledge about the barriers that many Aboriginal people face in their struggle to maintain their culture while adapting to today's rapidly changing world. This research will also demonstrate that First Nation settlements are communities and as such development initiatives should focus on place-specific values and needs within these communities along with regional and provincial development priorities.

The Alberta government is in the process of developing a land-use framework for the province that calls for regional land use plans incorporating social, economic, and environmental objectives. The government's stated emphasis is on sustainability. The results from this research project may contribute valuable insight into the place-based issues that should be considered within this framework; therefore, this study is both timely and potentially beneficial on national, provincial, regional, and local levels.

Delimitations and Limitations

This research project has a number of limitations. First of all the field study was completed within a two-month period during the summer of 2007. Time was restricted because of budget and travel considerations. Secondly, the sample size was limited to 20 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 and the data for this research project consists of the thoughts and experiences of members of this group and not the population of young adults as a whole. Therefore, the experiences of the participants in this study may vary somewhat from other young adults in the community, from other people in other age categories within the community, as well as from other populations living in other reserves in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta. First Nation communities are not homogenous and the history of development as well as the individual characteristics of each community varies, as do the personal experiences of members of these communities.

Another limitation of this project is the cultural differences between the researcher and the community. Although I am not a member of this community or the Dene Tha' culture, I was asked to undertake this study because the community

and its leadership were concerned about the future of their young people and wanted the research conducted. The Community Steering Committee for this project, therefore, helped determine the focus of the work and will have an opportunity to have input into all publication of the results. In addition, although all of the participants in this study spoke fluent English, it is possible that the interviews and the content of the transcripts could have been misinterpreted. As part of the collaborative nature of the research and to ensure that the First Nation had a clear understanding of the study results, a summary of the findings was presented to the Dene Tha' Band Council, the participants, and the community for confirmation and discussion before the analysis was conducted.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven distinct chapters. This first chapter provides a general overview and background of the study as well as the theoretical framework, the objectives, and the significance of this research. The second chapter provides the historical context for this project. Relevant literature on sense of place, place attachment, and disruption in place attachment theory is reviewed and concepts and terminology are explained in chapter three. The fourth chapter describes the research strategy and the methods used in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the findings. A summary of the findings is provided in chapter five. The sixth chapter includes the analysis and synthesis of the findings. The seventh and final chapter summarizes the study, discusses the significant findings, and provides implications for practice along with recommendations for further research and closing remarks.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The history of development in Canada provides the critical context for understanding the present day impacts of industrial activities on the First Nations people living in northern Alberta. This chapter explores the process of colonization and industrialization on a national and provincial level within Canada. It also focuses on the historical background of the Treaty 8 Region in northern Alberta and specifically the process of industrial development in the traditional territory of the Dene Tha' people.

Terra Nullius

It is commonly believed that ancestors of the Aboriginal people in Canada were the first inhabitants of North America following the last ice age (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Miller, 2002). When the Vikings arrived almost one thousand years ago, however, they viewed the land as *terra nullius* an empty land, despite the presence of the Aboriginal people living there. The Vikings claimed it for their homeland and named the place "Vinland". Later, the Europeans, also considering the continent an empty, unclaimed place, re-named the land "America" and took possession of its natural resources despite the presence of the Aboriginal people (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Ray, 2000).

The Europeans then applied their systems of land ownership and market economy to develop the colony as a source of new wealth for Europe. Over the next few hundred years, through colonization and industrialization, the homeland and the way of life of the original inhabitants was transformed and re-defined.

This transformation began on the eastern coast in Canada and spread westward as the rich natural resources of the country became known. Settlement and industrial development first expanded along the southern border and then moved northward eventually reaching what is now called the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

Early History

Ancestors of today's Aboriginal people living in northern Alberta were members of the ancient hunting societies that had existed in the area for over 10,000 years before the arrival of the first European (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Ray, 2002). The lifestyles of the different social groups within this region were determined by their location and by the type of natural resources that were available. For example, the people now known as the Chipewyans lived in the northeast section of the region where barren-ground caribou were abundant. They followed the migratory paths of the herds and supplemented their diet with fish, musk oxen, hares, and waterfowl when caribou were not available. The forest people, who are today known as the Dene Tha', hunted solitary moose and woodland caribou and snared rabbits, beavers, and other small animals. They also fished and hunted waterfowl in the numerous lakes and rivers found throughout the northwest section of what is today the province of Alberta, the northeastern section of British Columbia, and parts of the Northwest Territories. To the southwest were the Dunne-Za or Beaver people, who hunted big game such as bison, moose, and woodland caribou and trapped the beavers that were in abundance in their territory. The Sarcee people were distributed over

the southeastern section of the region and hunted seasonal game over a wide area to the north and south (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

All of the Aboriginal people who lived in northern Alberta spoke forms of the linguistic dialects of Athapaskan (Dene) or Algonquian (Cree) and shared some similar adaptive strategies such as high mobility, family-based social structures, flexibility, and respect for personal autonomy. They had long-established spiritual beliefs and values as well as cultural rituals and practices that had been passed down from generation to generation. They were nomadic and semi-nomadic and lived in small family units; however, different families would occasionally gather in areas where food was abundant to socialize, share information, and seek marriage partners (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

Archeological evidence also suggests that Aboriginal people in this region were trading and communicating with other neighbouring groups. They had acquired stone, copper, seashells, and other materials that were not available locally. Furthermore, they had even been supplied with some European pots and metal tools before the French and English fur-traders arrived (Berry & Brink, 2004).

Fur-trade Era

During the late 1700's, the fur-traders entered the northern portion of what is now western Canada. They capitalized on the existing trade networks and exploited the natural resources in the area in order to supply furs for export to European and American markets. In the process, the fur-trade altered life and

patterns of social and economic organization in the north in a variety of ways (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Prior to the fur trade, the Aboriginal people living in the boreal forest of northern Alberta, traveled long distances on foot using homemade fur moccasins and snowshoes, and they navigated the waterways in canoes made from bark or skins. They traveled light and had few material possessions to carry from place to place. The traders introduced new means of transportation that allowed them to move heavier loads of furs and trade goods over greater distances faster. The use of horses, horse drawn wagons, and pack and sled dogs soon led to the establishment of networks of trails linking the rich resource areas with the trading posts that were built on major river routes. In addition to following seasonally available game, life for many by the early 1800's included regular spring, summer, and early winter trips to the trading posts. These new modes of transportation and trade networks resulted in changes to human settlement patterns (Berry & Brink, 2004).

The trading posts became meeting places where people traded goods and socialized. As people became more involved in the fur-trade some people built permanent log houses at the trading posts. Small settlements developed that served as home bases for hunting and trapping families. These posts also provided employment opportunities for both men and women who found jobs working for the traders, explorers, and missionaries traveling in the region. In addition, male European and American employees at the posts married Aboriginal women and

raised families; eventually, culturally distinctive Métis communities developed (Berry & Brink, 2004).

Although trading and sharing food and other items were common practices in the north, the fur-trade eventually shifted the economic activities of Aboriginal people away from local needs "into international commodity marketing systems – systems that made demands on local resources far beyond what the ecosystem could bear" (Ray, 2002, p. 93). Rising demand for furs and an influx of non-Aboriginal trappers led to a rapid loss of the wild game that Aboriginal people had depended upon for many centuries. Moreover, "[d]irect trade and excessive competition had by the early 1800's, depleted meat and fur-bearing animals in parts of northern Alberta" (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000, p. 5). As early as the 1870's traders in the Peace River area were trading flour and other staple food items which suggest that locally available wild game was already in limited supply (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Fur trade companies operated on a debt system and extended credit to help trappers get through difficult seasons. As animal populations declined and fur prices fluctuated, some Aboriginal people found themselves increasingly dependant on trading companies for their survival. Trade was based solely on barter and currency was not introduced in the north until the late 1890's or early 1900's in the remote areas. Traders, therefore, held a monopoly and controlled both the price paid for furs and the cost and availability of trade goods. Even when people took on part-time work as guides, interpreters, cooks, and boatsmen to supplement their incomes, they were paid in goods rather than money. The

trade items, such as rifles, ammunition, and steel traps increased the efficiency of hunters but also led to further loss of the wild game that was needed to sustain the northern people (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

> Overwhelmed by the depletion of their resources and by the adoption of new lifestyles, the Native peoples began to move from independence, through interdependence with the European traders, towards dependence. (Ray, 2004, p. 94)

Furthermore, as more European traders, settlers, and trappers moved into the north, the increase in the human population and new systems of land use led to further demands on the natural resources and further erosion of the traditional economy (Ray, 2004).

Just as trade goods had reached northern communities before the Europeans, so did contagious Euro-Canadian diseases to which Aboriginal people had no resistance. During the earlier epidemics, "some groups lost up to 90 percent of their people" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 35). Moreover, cultural knowledge and skills were also lost in the process. A series of smallpox, measles, influenza, scarlet fever, and diphtheria outbreaks spread along the travel and trade routes throughout the north and traditional and European medicines did little to prevent the massive loss of life that resulted. Often starvation would accompany the epidemics as people were too weak to provide for themselves or care for other survivors (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004).

Along with the early fur traders the Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries came as well. The missionaries believed that Aboriginal people should adopt Euro-Canadian practices such as farming and sedentary living and

abandon their traditional lifestyle in favour of Christianity. Although the various church organizations did establish schools, hospitals, and farms in the north, their efforts to assimilate Aboriginal people into Canadian society led to further social, cultural, and economic hardships (Berry & Brink, 2004).

Dominion of Canada

The presence of the early fur traders and missionaries also led to increased exploration of the northern region. By the late nineteenth century, the north and its natural resources became economically and politically important to the national interests of the newly establish Dominion of Canada (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000). The large swath of land between 55 degrees and 60 degrees that runs across the northern portion of present day Canada was purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870 and "overnight, Aboriginal people's homeland became Canada's frontier" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 54).

Treaties in Western Canada

Eleven numbered treaties were negotiated with Aboriginal people across western Canada starting in 1871. First, treaties numbering one to seven were established both to permit the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway linking the country from east to west and to encourage settlement along the southern Canadian border. The signing of treaties proceeded northward as settlement and development expanded and the natural resources were identified. Finally treaties eight to eleven were negotiated with First Nations people in northern Canada, completing the initial treaty process (Conaty & Robinson, 2005).

By 1883, government surveyors and geologists started to survey land suitable for future agricultural settlements and to assess the timber, mineral, and petroleum resources in the north. Although the resources proved to be significant, the government was reluctant to become involved in the region because it did not want to assume responsibility for the Aboriginal people living there until the land was needed for settlement (McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Ray, 2002). The government gave assistance to prevent the starvation of northern people during the late 1880's; however, it was the need to control the illegal alcohol trade that forced the government to establish the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) in the area and to take a more active role in the north (Ray, 2002).

At the time there was growing unrest over the use, by non-Aboriginal and Métis trappers, of poison bait which inadvertently killed pack dogs and further threatened the trapping and food supply of northern people. Concern was also mounting over the loss of wild game and forest resources due to the careless use of fire. In addition, there was evidence that over-hunting of the wood buffalo was leading to its extinction and populations of beavers and other fur-bearing animals were declining. Finally, the Klondike Gold Rush (1896-99) in the Yukon highlighted the potential mineral wealth of the region and brought a wave of prospectors and frontier people who further threatened to destabilize the north. Consequently, the federal government began treaty negotiations in 1898 with the Aboriginal and Métis people in the Treaty 8 Region and took legal and political control of the land (Berry & Brink, 2004; Ray, 2002).

Treaty 8

From the government's standpoint treaties were necessary prerequisites for replacing Aboriginal communal land-use with a system of private land ownership, so that business investment would foster Euro-Canadian settlement and economic development in the country. The government viewed treaties as a temporary measure to peacefully acquire control of the land and the natural resources. These agreements were also intended to provide minimum supports for Aboriginal people until they could be fully assimilated into Canadian society (Conaty & Robinson, 2005).

From the perspective of Aboriginal people in northern Alberta, treaties were agreements to "share the land in peace" (Madill, 1986, n.p.). In return for signing the treaties, they anticipated receiving assistance in developing a new way of life that was in keeping with the changes that were taking place. Their immediate concerns included the encroachment of newcomers on their traditional territories, and the decline in the population of fish and animals that were required for sustenance and their economics. Famine relief, economic, and educational opportunities as well as health services were also important issues in many of the treaty negotiations (Conaty & Robinson, 2005; Madill, 1986).

For the Aboriginal people in the Treaty 8 Region, having assurances that their traditional way of life would be protected was critical. They insisted that their rights to hunt, fish, and trap throughout their territories and to practice their cultural and spiritual beliefs would be guaranteed forever (Conaty & Robinson, 2005; Madill, 1986). In addition, Aboriginal people in the north lived and hunted

in small family units with established family trapping territories that they felt must be protected. Consequently, they also insisted that they be allowed to continue their way of life and never be forced to settle permanently together on reserves (Madill, 1986). Although verbal promises were made, the written treaty agreements that were signed did not reflect those verbal promises (Berry & Brink, 2004). The legal text of Treaty 8 states that the "Indians DO HEREBY CEDE, RELEASE, SURRENDER AND YIELD UP to the Government . . . all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever" (Canada, 1899, n.p.). The treaty also states that signatories would have the following right:

> . . . the right to pursue their usual vocation of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered . . . subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the country . . . and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes. (Canada, 1899, n.p.).

Obviously different parties to the treaty interpreted its spirit and meaning in different ways; nevertheless, the end result was that the federal government gained legal control over the land and Aboriginal people in the Treaty 8 Region became wards of the state under the *Indian Act* (Canada, 1899).

Indian Act

The overall goal of the Indian Act (1850) was "to protect the Aboriginal people until they could be assimilated into the Euro-Canadian society" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 57). The Act controlled virtually every aspect of the Aboriginal people's lives; "legally defined who was and was not an Indian [and] determined

who could and could not live on reserves" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 57). As *registered Indians* Aboriginal people had no right to vote in federal or provincial elections, purchase or sell their own possessions, or leave their reserve without written permission (Berry & Brink, 2004).

The Indian Act stipulated that members of a band had to elect a Chief and council although this administrative body had little authority to make decisions or manage band affairs. Indian agents controlled all economic activities, and they also had the legal authority to enforce federal policies and laws. Furthermore, federal Indian agents, until their positions were abolished in 1969, had far reaching discretionary powers that enabled them to control the allocation of housing and food rations, enforce school attendance regulations, and keep the peace on reserves (Berry & Brink, 2004; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008e).

In the late 1800's, as part of the *assimilation strategy* under the Indian Act, government officials and missionaries instituted a campaign to outlaw traditional spiritual and religious practices, healing rituals, and social gatherings. The campaign continued for over 50 years until amendments finally removed the regulation in 1951. Despite government policies and other attempts to force Aboriginal people to give up their traditional lifestyle, many continued to maintain their economic, spiritual, and cultural way of life and their relationship with their land (Miller, 2002).

Province of Alberta

Although the enforcement of the Indian Act was initially sporadic across the north and many northern Aboriginal people did not settle on reserves until the mid-1900's, the signing of Treaty 8 signaled the arrival of an era of northern Euro-Canadian expansion that brought dramatic changes to the way of life in the region. The federal government began to stimulate Euro-Canadian settlement and industrial development in the north by laying the groundwork through legal acts and policies. In 1905, after Alberta was officially proclaimed a province, provincial leaders developed the framework for a staple economy based on exploitation and export of natural resources. Moreover, they actively encouraged, over the following decades, the development of transportation, agriculture, forestry, mining, and petroleum industries (Conaty & Robinson, 2004).

Natural Resource Policies

The provincial government also expanded Canadian regulations for controlling land ownership and the use of natural resources including wildlife. In response to rising public concern about environmental issues and the possible extinction of wildlife species, both the federal and provincial governments supported an *economically orientated conservation approach*. They viewed land and natural resources as commodities "that had to be managed to achieve a sustainable balance between conservation and production" (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000, p. 96). Land and resource use, they believed, should be licensed and regulated for commercial benefit. However, the federal government felt that

exceptions should be made for Aboriginal people who had treaty rights and depended upon hunting, fishing, and trapping for their subsistence and their economic and cultural survival. The province of Alberta, while refusing to make special provisions for Aboriginal people, began promoting a system of private ownership, commercial use of resources, and open access to all resources on public lands within Alberta. A series of fur, fishing, hunting, and forestry provincial policies followed that severely limited Aboriginal and Métis people's ability to carry out their traditional lifestyles (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Natural Resource Transfer Act

Federal-provincial disagreements continued until the *Natural Resources Transfer Act* (NRTA) transferred the control of, and rights to revenue from, the natural resources to the province of Alberta (Canada, 1930). The NRTA gave the province the ability to use all the land outside of reserves for private ownership and commercial development although provision was made to permit all citizens within the province to continue subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping on unoccupied crown lands. The Act did not protect Aboriginal treaty hunting rights because it did not ensure that the land required for traditional hunting and fishing would be protected. Furthermore, it did not recognize that Aboriginal people had specific and unique treaty rights within their traditional territories. The NRTA entrenched the provincial stance that the care and wellbeing of Aboriginal people were not provincial responsibilities and two separate development paths emerged. Reserves became islands of federal responsibility in a region of provincial jurisdiction. As a result, the NRTA further jeopardized the Aboriginal economic

system and marginalized Aboriginal people in the north from mainstream Alberta and Canada (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Native-Wilderness Equation

Many government officials at the time believed that Aboriginal people in the north would be assimilated into the provincial economy, would leave reserves, and would adopt Euro-Canadian economic, social, and cultural practices and values. They felt that the fur industry would soon be replaced with agriculture, forestry, mineral, and petroleum industries and that the land would be taken up by Euro-Canadian settlements. Aboriginal people, they believed, would eventually "disappear because of disease or assimilation" (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000, p. 102).

Other Euro-Canadians supported what has been termed the *Native-Wilderness Equation.* They believed that "bush life kept Natives law abiding, self-sufficient, and away from the temptations of the settlements and the evils of civilization" (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000, p. 102). Many people who supported this approach also believed that Aboriginal people should not be encouraged to become too educated and should be isolated on reserves in order to maintain their traditional cultural practices (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Reserve System

As Euro-Canadian settlement increased during the early and mid 1900's, Aboriginal people in northern Alberta began to move onto reserves to protect their ability to maintain their cultural traditions and economic practices and to adjust somehow to the changing conditions of the time. Reserves were selected in

peoples' traditional territories where wild game was still available and often in remote locations away from advancing settlement. As industrial development spread, the fur industry declined, private land ownership increased, and much of the land surrounding the reserves was allocated to other uses such as settlement, farming, forestry, mining, and energy activities (Price, 1999).

Life in the north underwent dramatic social and economic change. New urban centres developed and the population in the north shifted from being predominantly Aboriginal to being predominantly Anglo-Saxon. The newcomers quickly shaped the political and economic systems in keeping with their beliefs about individualism, market economy, personal accumulation of wealth, and the value of private land ownership. In contrast, many Aboriginal people in the north continued to rely on their traditional bush economy and their long established cultural values and beliefs (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000)

Although federal policies supported assimilation, the government did not assist Aboriginal people with adapting to the new economy. The reserve system isolated and marginalized Aboriginal people. At the same time, land use changes along with a lack of federal assistance limited opportunities and hindered Aboriginal people's ability to remain self-sufficient or adapt to the changing social and economic conditions (Shewell, 2004).

Under the Indian Act the federal government owns the land on reserves, preventing the private ownership of land; therefore, land could not be used as collateral for loans or mortgages to start businesses or build housing. In addition, only treaty Indians could live on reserves; consequently, it was not possible to

attract the human and financial capital needed for economic development. As a result, reserve communities had no private sector businesses that could generate local employment or circulate money within their communities. Moreover, Aboriginal people had to leave their reserves to find work. The money earned through employment and government support was spent outside the reserves and failed to stimulate the development of local business ventures (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000). In addition, few incentives or supports were offered for communities that attempted to adopt agriculture as an economic alternative. The federal government's treaty promise of equipment, seed, and livestock was not backed with concrete financial investments and Aboriginal farmers could not compete with heavily mechanized and capitalized commercial operations. Also, the land allotted to farm families on reserves was only 40 acres while homesteaders were "granted 160 acres under the government's homestead policy" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 67). Many reserves were also disadvantaged because they were located in remote areas, on marginal land, and away from markets and supplies. Moreover, federal Indian agents controlled all farming activities and individual farmers were not permitted to make "crucial decisions about planting, harvesting, and selling crops and livestock" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 67). There was little incentive, therefore, to take up farming even in areas where agriculture was possible (Berry & Brink, 2004).

The reserve system not only hindered economic development but it also created educational, health, and social disparities between Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal communities. As the population in towns and urban centres increased

in the north, hospitals, schools, recreation, and other community services were developed using local property taxes. Small communities with low tax bases and Aboriginal communities that had no private land ownership were unable to generate the necessary revenue through land taxation to cover the cost of developing essential services such as health, education, recreation, and social services (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

The federal government did provide minimal health care services during measles and tuberculosis outbreaks in some Aboriginal communities but services were poorly funded and sporadic. Emergency medical services were available in larger urban centres for people who could afford to pay for services or qualify for relief; however, Aboriginal people were "ineligible for any type of relief from local governments" (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000, p. 231). In addition, health workers were recruited and assigned to larger northern communities but few were hired to provide traveling clinics in remote locations (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

Since taxpayers in Euro-Canadian communities funded public education, low budget church-run residential schools were often the only option for Aboriginal students. Residential schooling removed children from their families and their culture and had lasting impacts on many who attended, especially those who suffered physical and sexual abuse from their residential care-givers. As well, the focus of Aboriginal education was on assimilation and only minimal attention was given to academic achievement, which further limited the long-term options for Aboriginal people (Berry & Brink, 2004).

Although Aboriginal communities in the north were economically marginalized, the federal government was reluctant to provide social welfare or famine relief. Relief funds and other social services were minimal, were administered by Indian Affairs rather than the local bands, and "were not comparable to those available to other Canadians" (Shewell, 2004, p. 244). Government reforms in the late 1960's led to improvements in social services but the lack of employment and educational opportunities on reserves resulted in many people becoming reliant on government assistance in order to survive (Shewell, 2004).

Impacts of Industrial Expansion

Overall, Aboriginal communities have not kept pace with the economic development and prosperity occurring in non-Aboriginal communities throughout Alberta (Ross, 2003). In addition, the natural environment that has provided subsistence and an economic base for Aboriginal people has become increasingly eroded due to industrial expansion in the land surrounding their reserves. Moreover, "[f]orestry, hydro-development, mining, and oil and gas exploration all put tremendous pressure on resources . . . [and] impeded access to hunting, trapping, and fishing grounds" (Berry & Brink, 2004, p. 66). Because the province controls and manages land use on all public land outside federal Indian reserves, Aboriginal people have had little input into natural resource decisions (Buckley, 1993; Canada Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Williams, 2004). In addition, federal and provincial policies continue to limit development options on reserves even though the federal government acknowledges Aboriginal

peoples' right to self-government and now recognizes bands as First Nations (Indian and Northern Affairs, 2008a, 2008d).

Accelerating Industrial Development

Meanwhile, according to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (2007), Alberta has experienced the fastest growth rate in Canada over the last decade and in 2005 the province reported a gross domestic product of more than $218 billion. In addition, over the last 25 years the population of the province has doubled to 3.4 million and it is expected to reach over 5 million within the next quarter century. The accelerating industrial development in the province has led to

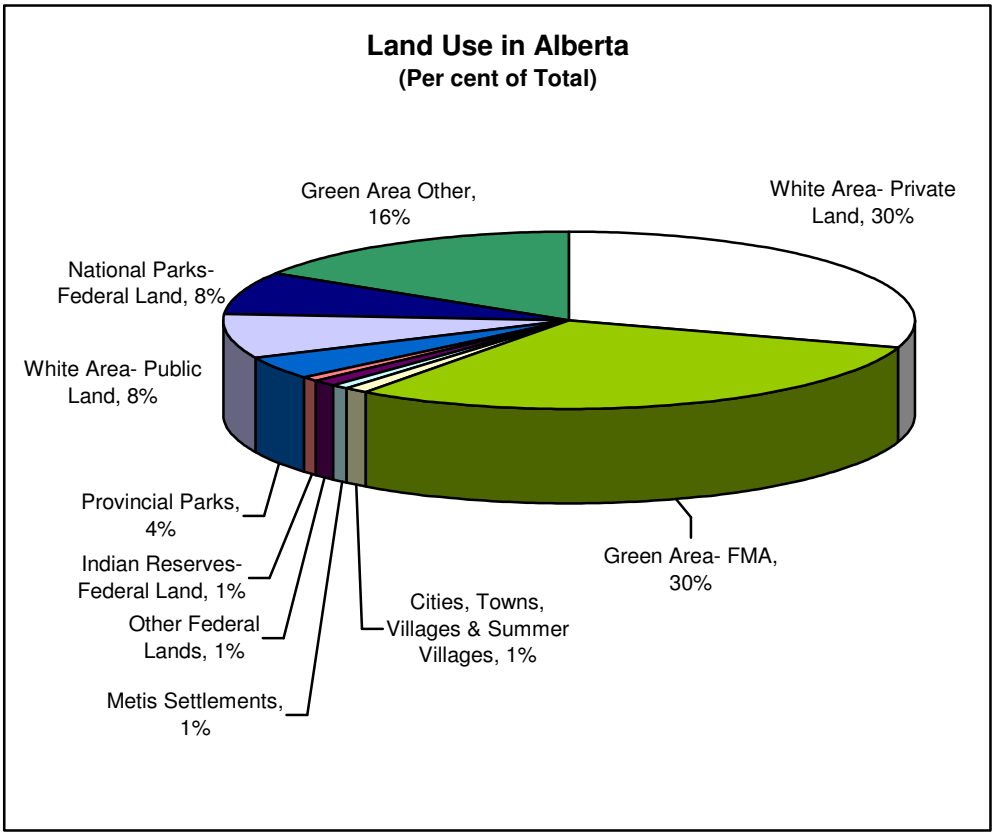
> hyper-growth in population and economic activities [that] is putting unprecedented pressure on Alberta's landscapes. There are competing demands for oil, gas, forestry, agriculture, industrial development, housing, recreation and conservation – often on the same lands. (p. i)

At the same time, awareness continues to grow that the *cumulative effects* – "the changes to the environment caused by an activity in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable human activities" (p. 5) are already impacting the health and natural processes of the environment. The biodiversity of the province is threatened by the degradation, fragmentation, and loss of habitat. Riparian and watershed areas are under increasing pressure and the population and distribution of wildlife and fish species in the province are being altered due to habitat destruction and changing precipitation and weather patterns resulting from industrial activities and climate change.

Land Allocation

Alberta has an area of 164 million acres, 3 per cent of which is water. About 30 percent of the land is privately owned by individuals, companies, and organizations. The other 61 percent is considered public land, is owned by the province, and is used for public recreation, grazing, conservation, industrial development, and transportation. The remaining 10 percent is owned by the federal government and consists of national parks, Indian reserves, and military areas (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007) (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Provincial Land Use in Alberta



From "Land-use framework: Understanding land use in Alberta," by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007, Edmonton: Government of Alberta. p. 10.

Green and White Areas of Alberta

The Province, in 1948, designated all of the land in Alberta into two management areas, the white area and the green area. The *white area* takes up 39 percent of the province, is classified as the settlement area, and is located in the populated "southern, central, and Peace River region" (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007, p. 11). The authority to establish regulations and determine land use policies rests with municipal governments on privately owned land within this area and the province manages land use on all public lands. The *green area* is the forested region which covers 61 percent of the province. This area is located in northern Alberta and in the mountainous western border region. The land is primarily used for forestry, oil and gas, conservation, and recreation. The green area is managed by the Alberta government with the exception of federally controlled Indian, military, and park reserves. The province issues *dispositions* on public land in the form of "land-use contracts such as agreements, easements, leases, letters of authority, licenses, permits, or quotas" (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007, p. 15). Fees and royalties collected on these dispositions produce revenue for the province and are used to provide provincial programs and services (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007).

Provincial Allocations

In 2005, there were 373,000 kilometers of pipelines transporting petroleum and other products in the province (Alberta Industrial Heartland, 2008).

There were 11 coal mines and 9.9 million hectares of land were "under active mineral exploration permits for diamonds, iron, uranium, and precious metals including gold" (Alberta Energy and Utility Board, 2005, p. 3). An additional 5.2 million hectares were staked for potential future exploration (Alberta Energy and Utility Board, 2005). Approximately 52 million hectares were taken up for crops, livestock, and value added agricultural production, while virtually all of Alberta's timberland was already allocated to commercial timber and pulp and paper companies by 2005. The province also had 520 parks and protected areas that covered 7 million acres or nearly 4 per cent of the land (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007). In 2007, almost 20,000 new oil and gas wells were drilled in Alberta (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, 2008a) and over 20 mining and in-situ projects were operating in three different oil sands areas within the province (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, 2008b).

With the increase in world wide demand for energy the economic incentive to intensify exploration and extraction activities is also rapidly increasing. Demand for electrical energy is also escalating and the Alberta government is now considering proposals for nuclear power plants in the Peace River and Whitecourt areas in northwest region of the province (Hall, 2007). Negotiations are also underway for the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline that will connect a mainline gas pipeline from the Mackenzie River Delta to the existing pipeline networks in northern Alberta (CBC News, 2007). In addition, world wide demand for agriculture and bio-fuel production continues to increase,

together with the need for power and transportation infrastructure improvements throughout the province (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007).

Indian Oil and Gas

First Nations communities whose traditional territories are located in regions where industrial and extractive activities are occurring are under increasing pressure as well. Not only are their traditional territories being altered through commercial development but the reserve lands where their communities are located are now also being considered for more intensive industrial development. Under the Indian Act, the federal *Indian Oil and Gas Canada* department manages oil and gas resources on reserves. This federal government body issues land use permits, collects fees and royalties, and distributes a portion of the revenue to the First Nations bands. The federal government is actively encouraging First Nations to partner with industry in order to more extensively develop oil and gas deposits on 300 *designated* reserves across the country and is issuing an increasing number of oil and gas leases and permits on First Nation reserves where people live (Indian and Northern Affairs, 2008b, 2008c).

Land-use Framework

The Alberta government is attempting to manage these growth pressures and balance competing social, environmental, and economic interests throughout the province, and thus began developing a regional *Land-Use Framework* in 2006. The goal of this provincial initiative is to produce a long term vision for land use management that will provide direction for future resource decisions.

The stated focus of the framework is on sustainability that "involves protecting the natural environment and ensuring our economic and social well-being" (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007, p. 5). The Land-Use Framework, which is expected to be completely operational by 2012, is being developed through consultation with the various stakeholders including industry, conservation and environmental groups, academics, municipal governments, and Aboriginal and Métis people (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, 2007).

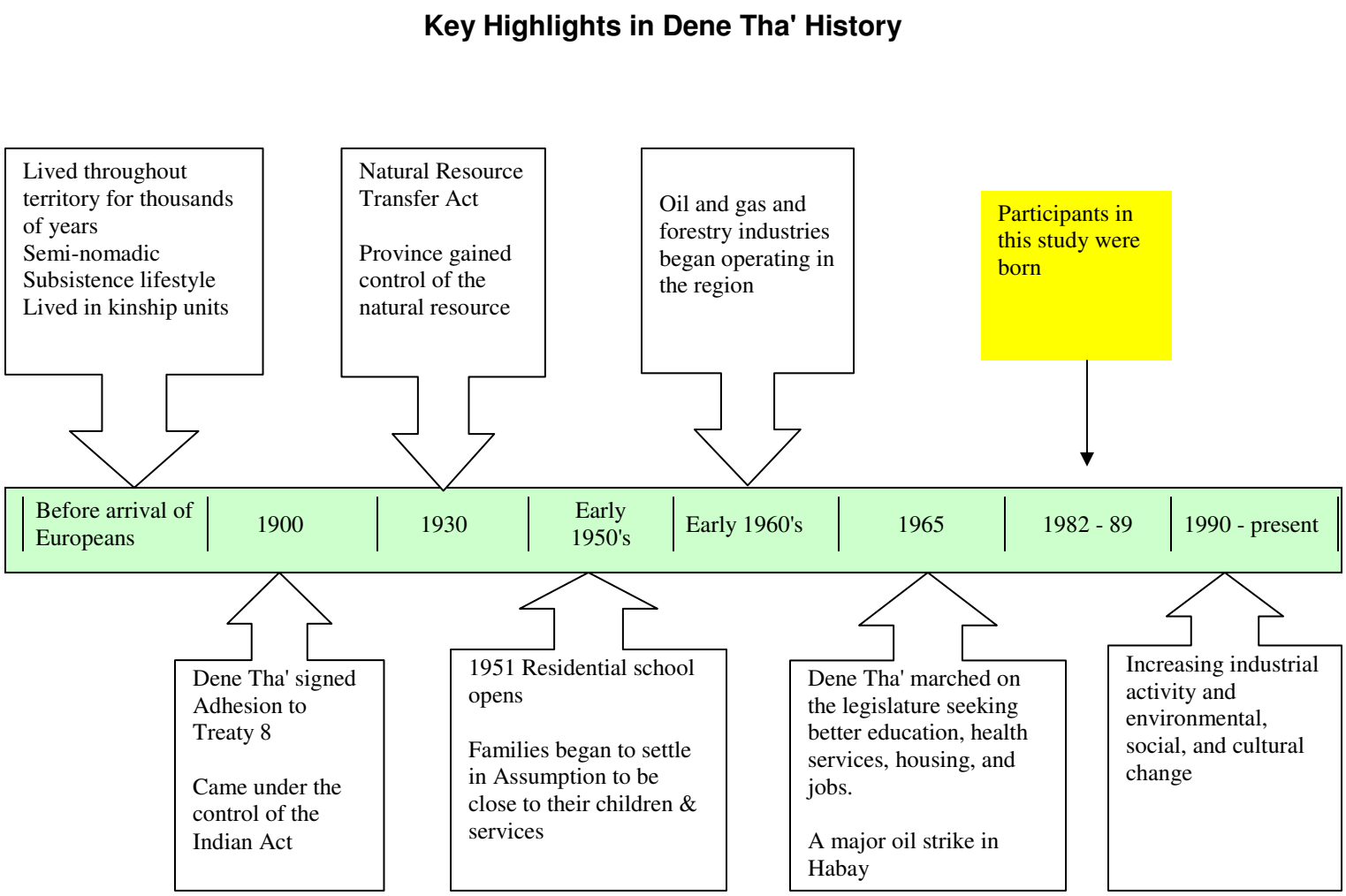
Alberta's First Nations Consultation Policy

Following Supreme Court decisions, in 2005 the Alberta government officially recognized the treaty rights of Aboriginal people and the provinces' "duty to consult with First Nations where legislation, regulations or other actions infringe treaty rights" (Alberta, 2005, p. 4). The *First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development* and the companion *Alberta's First Nations Consultation Guidelines on Land Management* establish consultation procedures for future land use and industrial activities on public land that may impact First Nations people, their traditional territories, and their way of life (Alberta Indian Relations, 2008). The effectiveness of the Land-Use Framework and the consultation process will be determined by the degree to which they achieve their goals of protecting the environment and the economic and social well-being of all Albertans, including the Dene Tha' people living in the north; however, the Land-Use Framework and consultation process do not address the consequences of past resource management decisions.

Dene Tha’ First Nation

Industrial development and social, political, economic, and environmental change occurred at different times and with different intensities across the Treaty 8 Region. Geographic location, the nature of the local natural resources, and the market demand for those resources determined when and how industrial development occurred. For the Dene Tha' people, who were living in remote locations throughout the northwest section of Alberta, parts of British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories, the impacts of Euro-Canadian expansion began to significantly alter their traditional subsistence economy and their way of life in the late 1800's (Bouchard, 2006) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Key Highlights in Dene Tha' History



Early History

The Dene Tha' people descend from the ancient hunting societies that had existed in the north for thousands of years. Their traditional territories were located in areas where wild game was sparsely distributed and the food supply varied with the seasons; consequently, the Dene Tha' developed unique social and cultural practices that permitted their survival. They were semi-nomadic and lived, traveled, and hunted in small family units consisting of 10 to 12 people (Asch & Wishart; 2004; Bouchard, 2006). Each family unit was autonomous and there was no formal political structure or elected leaders. Leaders were chosen for their success in the hunt and group decisions were made by consensus and with the advice of Elders (Goulet, 1998). Each family followed seasonally available game using traditional knowledge and skills that had been passed down from generation to generation within their kinship unit. Elders were honoured and respected because they possessed essential survival knowledge and passed on this information through oral stories. Children were taught cultural practices and skills by their parents and extended family members as they participated in routine daily food gathering and preparation activities and lived and traveled on the land. They gained skills through observation, imitation, and direct personal experience (Goulet; 1998; The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997).

Although the Dene Tha' people lived in scattered, isolated family groups they would gather in areas were game and fish were abundant during the summer months. Groups of 200 to 250 people would share information, socialize, conduct spiritual and cultural ceremonies, and exchange marriage partners. As summer

ended and the resources became depleted in the area, the small family units would disperse once again throughout their traditional lands. This pattern of *population dispersal* continued unchanged for centuries until the arrival of the fur-trade (Bouchard, 2006).

Impact of the Fur-trade

The fur traders established trading posts in the region and instead of gathering at the traditional summer meeting places, by the early 1900's Dene people were traveling to the trading posts during the summer and settlement patterns began to change as a result (Asch & Wishart, 2004). As in other locations in the north, small semi-permanent settlements eventually developed and some families used these as temporary home bases. Some also began establishing cabins within their traditional trapping and hunting areas (Bouchard, 2006).

The fur traders brought new food items such as flour, tea, sugar, and rice into the region. In addition, they brought pack dogs, horses, steel traps, and rifles to further the collection of furs. The new equipment improved the efficiency of hunters but also contributed to the decline of wild game required for subsistence. The Dene Tha' people continued to practice their cultural traditions and to maintain their semi-nomadic subsistence lifestyle but by the early 20th-century they were increasingly dependant on the fur trade and western trade goods (Asch & Wishart, 2004).

Adherence to Treaty 8

As more Euro-Canadians arrived in the north the Dene Tha' adhered to Treaty 8 in 1900. The Dene Tha' leadership at the time believed that the treaty was an agreement to co-exist and "to share the land in peace" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 4). The Dene Tha' people believe that their ancestors who signed the agreement "truly understood that the ownership of their traditional territories was promised to be included in the Treaty document" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 4). The agreement was written in formal legal English and had been explained to them by a Cree speaking interpreter who had little understanding of the Dene language. Furthermore, the document that Dene Tha' leaders actually signed was not Treaty 8 but an adhesion to Treaty 8. The original treaty had already been negotiated in 1898 with other Aboriginal bands and without the involvement of the Dene Tha'. The Dene Tha' people feel that their leaders were manipulated into signing the agreement and their Elders insist "that none of our traditional lands have ever been given up and will never be given up" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 4). The Dene Tha', since adhering to the treaty, have struggled to maintain their traditional way of life and continue to assert that the Government of Canada has not kept the promises that it made to their Elders and their people (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997).

Enforcement of Federal and Provincial Policies

Dene Tha' people were not assigned reserves until decades after signing the agreement. They continued to hunt and trap throughout their traditional territory; nevertheless, adhering to the treaty placed them under the control of the Indian Act and federal and provincial regulations (Goulet, 1998). In 1939, the Alberta government introduced a system of *Registered Traplines* that required all trappers in the province to be licensed and restricted the area in which they could trap. The Dene Tha' had always hunted, trapped, and lived freely throughout their territory and the concept of land boundaries and private ownership of land and resources was foreign to them, as it was to other Aboriginal people in the north. Their cultural practices and social organization were based on communal use and shared resources. Many family units were reluctant to register their traplines, therefore, and they remained without licenses well into the 1950's. In addition, some of the Dene Tha' people regularly trapped and hunted outside the legal boundaries of Alberta and routinely traveled into the northeast portion of British Columbia and the southern section of the Northwest Territories in search of food and furs. They were unable to register their family traplines outside the province of Alberta; because of government policies that restricted registration to lands within provincial boundaries. Even though the government surveyed and bulldozed provincial boundary lines many Dene Tha' hunters continued to use their traditional hunting and trapping areas despite the regulations (Bouchard, 2006).

The Registered Trapline policy created unequal access to what was once a shared resource. Other regulations followed that set limits and quotas on the harvesting of wildlife which further hindered the ability of all Aboriginal people in the north to remain self-sufficient. Over-hunting during the fur-trade had led to the depletion of wild game and fur-bearing animals and the new conservation policies, along with increased Euro-Canadian settlement in the area, created further hardships for Aboriginal people including the Dene Tha' people (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000).

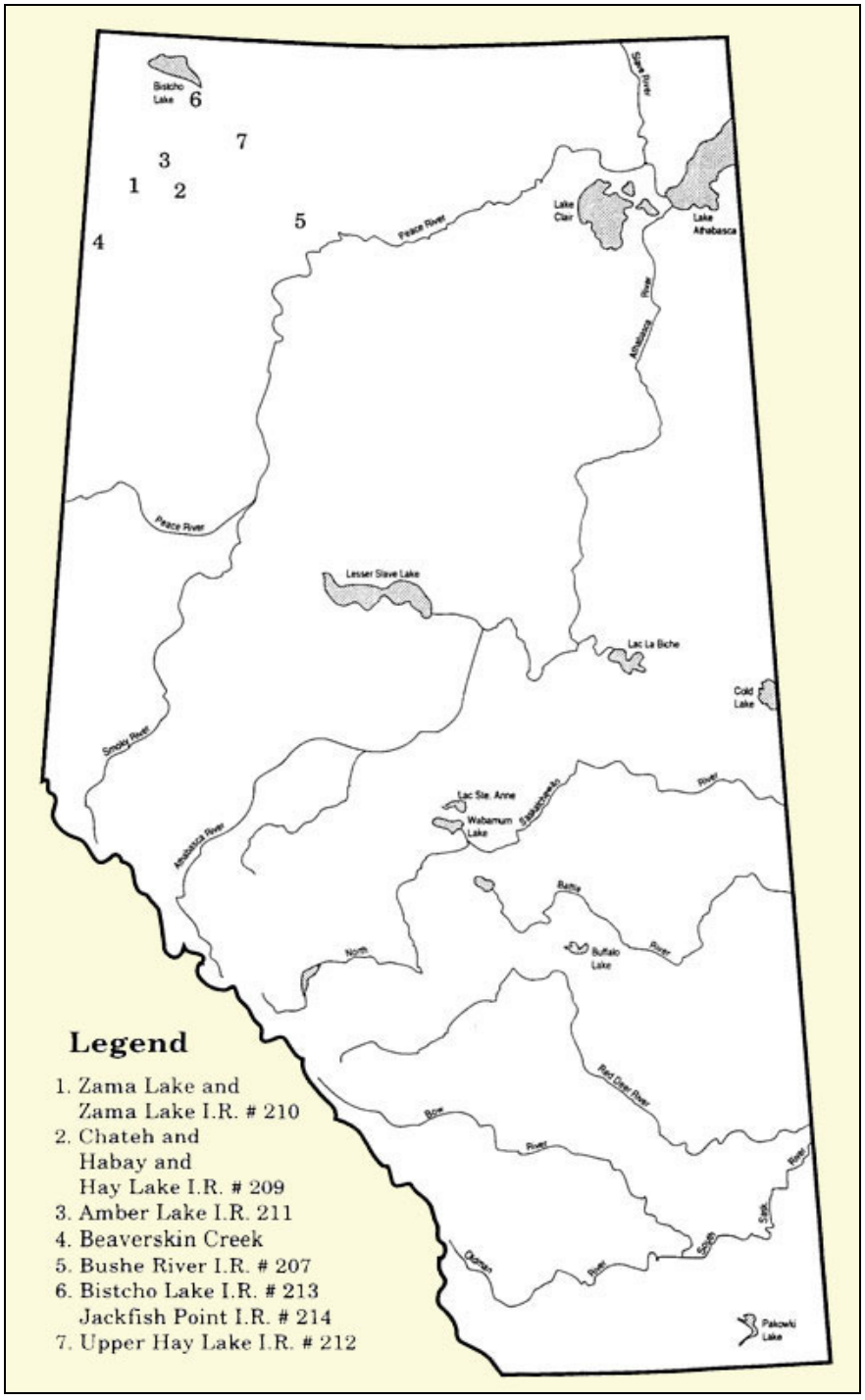
Changing Settlement Patterns

The Dene Tha' had been promised 70,000 acres of reserve lands when they adhered to Treaty 8 in 1900, but most family units continued their semi-nomadic lifestyle and consequently negotiations for reserves did not begin until the 1930's (Bouchard, 2006). When reserves were established, rather than assigning one large reserve for all Dene Tha' people, seven smaller parcels were allocated (Figure 3 & 4).

Figure 3: Map of Dene Tha' Communities

From "Traditional land-use and occupancy study," by The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, The Arctic Institute of North America, p. 21.

Figure 4: Map of Dene Tha' Reserves



From ″Place names of Alberta people: The land, the people, and their stories," Retrieved on May 1, 2009, from http://www.albertasource.ca/placenames/programs/denetha/map.html

These reserves were in various locations throughout their traditional territory where people had already started to settle. Small villages developed in Meander River (Upper Hay Lakes Reserve #212), Bushe River (Bushe River Reserve #207), and Hay Lakes (Hay Lake Reserve #209). Father Joseph Habay, an Oblate missionary, established a church in Hay Lakes in 1917; the community of Habay formed and was named after him. During the 1930's more families moved to Habay and built log homes and small farms, although many families still continued to hunt and trap throughout their territories during most of the year (Bouchard, 2006).

Adapting to Change

The decline of the fur industry and the depletion of wildlife meant that Dene Tha' people were forced to compete with Euro-Canadians for wage employment. Few had any formal education and most could not speak English. They knew that life in the north was changing and they wanted their children to become educated in order to adjust to the changes. As well, the size of their families had grown and it had become increasingly difficult to pack enough supplies to maintain their large groups. They had to travel great distances in search of food and it was not possible for them to send their children to a regular day school even if one was available. Consequently, the band leadership sent petitions to the federal government in 1938, and again in 1948, asking for a boarding school for their children and a hospital for their people because many were suffering from an outbreak of tuberculosis at the time. A local missionary school and a church were built in Assumption on the Hay Lake reserve in 1951

and soon after a nursing station and a cemetery, were also established there. Families began to settle around the mission school and when severe flooding occurred in the village of Habay most families there re-located to Assumption as well (Bouchard, 2006; Goulet, 1998). By the mid 1960's more than 600 people lived in the community (Hill & Clark, 1965).

Desperate Living Conditions

Living conditions on the Hay Lake reserve and Assumption were desperate at this time (Aalborg, 1965; Hill, & Clark, 1965; "Official Promises," 1965). Newspaper articles that appeared in the Edmonton Journal in February 1965 described the quality of life on the reserve as being "below human standards" ("Official Promises," 1965, p.1) and they compared life there, "with an emerging African state instead of supposedly civilized Canada" ("Official Promises," 1965, p. 12). People were living in cabins with only cardboard or plywood covering the bare ground and with mud roofs that leaked every time it rained. There was no running water, electricity, or indoor plumbing. Many people had no furniture and slept on beds made of boards or else on the mud floors even at "50 below" ("Official Promises," 1965, p. 12). All the homes had wood heat and because firewood was expensive, families had to gather and haul wood from the surrounding bush by hand ("Official Promises," 1965).

The community of Assumption was also isolated, since it was 65 miles away from the nearest road ("We're People," 1965). There was no employment in Assumption and all of the people were living on government relief which at that time was "$22 per month for the head of the household, $15 for every adult over

12 years, and $12 for youngsters under 12" ("Official Promises," 1965, p. 12). Furthermore, the wildlife on the reserve had been depleted and because people were no longer following the seasonally available game, families were no longer self-sufficient and many were going hungry (Aalborg, 1965; Hill, & Clark, 1965, "Official Promises," 1965).

Economic and Social Disparity

Although conditions on the Hay Lake reserve and other northern reserves were difficult (Harker, 1965), the economy in the rest of the province was flourishing. The government of Alberta reported a surplus of $50,000,000 in 1964 which at the time was considered a large amount of money and the province had projected a similar surplus for 1965. The increase in provincial revenue was attributed to oil and gas royalties and the sale of leases on provincial crown land ("Alberta Treasury," 1965). In northeastern Alberta, the community of Fort McMurray was bracing for a boom because the initial phase of the oil sands development was underway. New businesses were moving north and housing and road construction was rapidly being completed in anticipation of the coming boom (Howitt, 1965). The northwest section of the province was also experiencing a boom in "oil exploration, lumbering, and farming" (Hill & Clark, 1965, p. 1). Conversely, few Aboriginal people in the north were benefiting from the industrial development because they lacked the training to work in the new industries (Hill & Clark, 1965, p. 2). Furthermore, the province no longer paid oil dividends to Aboriginal people. In 1957, the province had agreed to pay one-third of oil royalties directly to citizens in the province but in 1959 the government

amended the policy and instead issued grants to municipalities. Aboriginal communities are not municipalities and are considered a federal responsibility; therefore, they did not qualify for royalty funds under the new system ("Alberta's Indians," 1965).

Appealing to the Province for Help

On February 22, 1965 a delegation of 110 Dene Tha' men traveled over 600 miles from Assumption to the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton, with a petition asking for help. Led by Chief Harry Chonkalay and Father Paul-Eugene Plouffe, the men marched on the parliament carrying signs that read "We're People First – Not Just Indians", "Where Is My Canadian Pride?", and "We Want Work Not Welfare" ("We're People," 1965). They asked the provincial government to intervene because they were dissatisfied with the inaction of their federal Indian Agent and the Government of Canada. They were seeking better housing, electricity, and running water. They wanted trade and vocational training programs, better health services, and economic development for their community ("We're People," 1965). Provincial leaders offered sympathy but explained that they had no jurisdiction on Aboriginal reserves and wired Ottawa about the issue. In response, the federal government sent Victor Valentine from the Economic Development Department of Indian Affairs to meet with the delegation and tour the Hay Lake reserve. ("Investigators Study," 1965)

Mr. Valentine agreed to introduce some temporary measures to deal with the problem but stated that long-term solutions would only be possible if they were part of a "regional or provincial development plan" ("Official Promises,"

1965, p. 11). He continued by explaining that economic development on reserves would require federal-provincial planning; "Otherwise you get pockets of development" and "We don't want to shift people from depending on one marginal industry to depending on another" ("Official Promises," 1965, p. 11). He also stated that he was aware that responding to the requests of the Dene Tha' band might set a precedent and noted that "other Indian bands will make representations to the authorities for similar treatment to that received by the Hay Lake band" ("Investigators Study," 1965, p. 3).

The Dene Tha' people left Edmonton with promises from the federal government that they would make lasting improvements in the community, would work together with the province to help Aboriginal communities across the north, and would provide economic development assistance ("Indian Cost-Sharing," 1965; "Investigators Study," 1965; "No Difficulties," 1965; "Official Promises," 1965). The government also announced that a major oil strike in the Hay Lake area had been made. The strike was presented as a potential economic opportunity, a means of creating jobs for the Dene Tha' people, and "a partial answer to the problem" ("Oil Strikes," 1965, p. 1).

Some changes were made. The federal government built some simple frame houses in Assumption. They eventually established a band-owned store, a police station, and a court house. Many families did get electricity and running water. For a while an adult vocation program was even running in the community as well as a local sawmill. The missionary school for the children closed in 1969 and a new day school was built to replace it. As well, a road was constructed

linking High Level with the community of Rainbow Lake west of Assumption, after a major oil and gas discovery was made in that area. Although the road by-passed Assumption, a nine mile gravel road was built to allow access to the oil deposits and to connect with the community (Goulet, 2004). In 1965, the Dene Tha' people changed the name of Assumption to Chateh in honour of their first Chief who had signed Treaty 8 (Goulet, 1998). For a time, the Dene Tha' people looked forward to a better future, to having jobs, and to becoming self-sufficient once again (Aalborg, 1965); however, the promise of lasting economic development never materialized.

In fact, even before the Dene Tha' delegation had returned home, federal-provincial disagreements were starting to develop over sharing the cost of an economic development program. Aboriginal people do not pay provincial taxes as part of their treaty agreements and the province; consequently, felt that the provincial government had no responsibility to provide the Aboriginal people with services or supports. Honorable F. C. Colbourne, the provincial spokesman on Indian Affairs at the time, outlined the Alberta government's position with the following statement:

> We have taken the position that the federal government should continue to assume the full financial responsibility for those native people living on Indian Reservations and enjoying exemption from the responsibility of contributing to the costs of the services they would receive under the agreement. ("Indian Cost-Sharing," 1965, p. 3)

The Dene Tha' reserves remained a federal responsibility and the Province of Alberta continued to develop forestry and oil and gas industries on public land

outside the reserve boundaries (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). The disparity in living standards between Dene Tha' communities and other non-Aboriginal communities in Alberta continues (McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004).

Socio-Economic Indicators

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada compiles a *Community Well-being Index* (CWB) to monitor socio-economic conditions on First Nation reserves across Canada. The latest index used 2001 census data to produce an overall measure of wellbeing for each band. The scores include: level of education; employment; per capita income; and quality and quantity of housing found on band reserves (McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004). The three Dene Tha' communities of Meander, Bushe River, and Chateh received a combined score of 57 out of a possible 100, the second lowest score in the province. The Heart Lake First Nation, which is also located in northern Alberta, scored the lowest with 53. The average score for First Nations communities in Alberta was 60 while the average score for non-First Nation communities in the province was 84 (McHardy & O'Sullivan, 2004).

According to 2006 census data, of the 951 people who lived in Chateh, 450 people, or 45 percent were under the age of 25 years. The largest cohort was the 10 to 14 year olds and the second largest was the 15 to 19 year old age group. A total of 86 percent of the people over 15 years of age had less than a high school education (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Statistics Canada data for 2006 indicates that the labour force participation rate in Chateh was 40.6 percent, the employment rate was 31.2 percent, and the

unemployment rate was 23.1 percent. By contrast, the data for Alberta shows a participation rate of 74 percent, an employment rate of 70.9 percent, and an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent. In the same time period the median income for persons over 15 years of age with earnings in Chateh was $8,880, and less than a third of the working people had full-time employment. Just over 31 percent of population was receiving government transfer payments to supplement their income. The figures for the province show a median income for the 15 and older age group of $29,738, of whom almost 52 percent worked full-time. Only 7.2 percent of Albertans received government income support (Statistics Canada, 2007).

A total of 44.2 percent of the houses in the community of Chateh needed major repairs according to the 2006 census. Housing conditions were considered crowded with 21.1 percent of the homes having more than one person per room. By contrast, only 6.7 percent of the homes in Alberta needed major repairs and only 1.3 percent of homes had more than one person per room (Statistics Canada, 2007).

Dene Tha' Traditional Land-use and Occupancy Study

In addition to the difficult economic and living conditions that the Dene Tha' people have endured they have also had to live with the increasing industrial development that has intensified in the region since the 1990's. Many Dene Tha' people in the later part of the century, grew concerned that their land was being destroyed in their traditional territory. They saw changes in water quality, animal populations, and habitat. They felt that the land was being fragmented by seismic

lines and roads and that the forest was changing because trees were being harvested and bulldozed. They also felt that industrial activity was destroying important Dene Tha' cultural and spiritual sites. Their hunting cabins were being vandalized and demolished. Even ancestral gravesites were being unearthed by the forestry and oil and gas companies. In addition, the Dene Tha' people's access to their hunting areas was being restricted because companies were fencing off areas and posting "danger" and "private property" signs throughout Dene territory (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997).

In 1997, the *Dene Tha' Traditional Land-use and Occupancy Study* (TLUOS) was written, in part, to educate and alert government and industry people about Dene Tha' history and important Dene Tha' places. The document details traditional land use through interviews with Elders. The Elders who participated in the project were hopeful that their cultural knowledge and the land would be preserved for their grandchildren. The Elders talked about:

> the promise of protecting the land for future generations, so that they would have the opportunity to partake in the same traditional heritage as they and their forefathers had done. They also expressed the fear that this opportunity for future generations was rapidly fading away. (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 23)

The hunters and trappers said they felt powerless and frustrated about their "lack of input into land use decisions regarding their traditional territory" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 16). As Alphonse Scha-Sees, a Dene Tha' Elder said "To this day, when I think of these young children today, I shed tears for them. What will happen to them?" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 82).

Conclusion

It has been ten years since the TLUOS was completed and now the grandchildren of these Elders are young adults and some have children of their own. To find out what is happening to them and to further our understanding of the consequences of industrial development in northern Alberta, 20 young adults living in Chateh were invited to share their perspective on life in their community and on the changes that they see taking place. The following chapter provides the theoretical foundations for this investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study explores the impacts of industrial development through the lens of sense of place; therefore, this literature review examines the significance of place in people's lives as well as concepts and theories related to place, sense of place, and place attachment. Particular emphasis is given to the process by which people develop and maintain a sense of place and the factors that influence this process. In addition, this review includes literature concerning the consequences of changes to place, drawing from Brown and Perkins' (1992) work on disruption in place attachments, as well as, other selected literature.

The Significance of Place

The significance of place and sense of place to the human soul and human existence has been recognized since Pagan times when it was believed that local place spirits protected places and their inhabitants from harm. In ancient Greece, Aristotle referred to place as the inner surface that "marks the beginning of the outside world . . . it is the first thing that [a person] is" (Morison, 2002, p. 142). To the Romans, every place – every forest, river, village, and city was home to a unique spirit that "gave identity to that place by its presence and its actions" (Relph, 2007, p. 18). In more recent times, Heidegger (1962), a pioneer in existential philosophy, laid down the ontological roots of our modern conceptualization of place in his classic work *Being and Time.* Heidegger wrote of the interdependent relationship of place and its people and recognized humanity's responsibility to "spare, preserve, and care for animals, people, and

especially places" (Windsor & McVey, 2005, p. 147). Since that time almost every discipline has incorporated, in some way, the significance of place in their field of study. Place, and its role in the everyday lives of people worldwide, has been reflected in anthropology, architecture and planning, art, education, environmental psychology, geography, history, human health, literature, philosophy, recreation, and sociology.

In this context then, *place* is more than a location; it involves human experiences, emotions, and meanings attached to the lived environment (Tuan, 1977). The subjective nature of this term has made it difficult to measure and quantify, but even so, each discipline has developed concepts and terminology to help explain the complex human-place relationships that are a part of its inquiry. This very diversity of approach and vocabulary challenges researchers to take a multi-disciplinary perspective. Rather than isolate our knowledge of place into disciplinary units, we are challenged to incorporate place as an intrinsic component of our world.

Malpus (1999), a leading philosopher, argues that place is so fundamentally important to human identity and our relationships on earth that "there is no possibility of understanding human existence . . . other than through an understanding of place" (pp. 15-16). Gieryn (2000) supports this philosophical approach, and calls on sociologists to recognize the significance of place in their studies. He argues that all sociology takes place in some place, somewhere, and suggests that: "[m]aybe a place-sensitive sociology is not a set of empirical findings at all or even a distinctive kind of explanatory model, but rather a way to

do sociology in a different key - a visual key" (p. 483). Places are contested spaces and are defensible. Gieryn suggests therefore, that there is a need for on-the-ground case studies that put "human faces on the winners and losers" (p. 470) in the struggle to define places and make places into something other than what they are, or have been, to the people who inhabit them. This endeavor requires an understanding of what place is, what it means to people, and what happens to people when their places are re-defined and changed.

Space, Place, and Homeland

Researchers began exploring these questions in the 1950's in the aftermath of WWII, and then as well in the 1960's and 1970's, amid growing concern about the impacts of industrial development on people and the environment. One of the early outstanding pioneers was geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) who recognized that there is a universal biological, psychological, social, and spiritual human need for both space and place. Although "culture and experience strongly influence the interpretation of the environment" (p. 55), access to *space* within the environment represents access to freedom, identity, power, prestige, resources, and security and for all people. As space becomes known and defined by human beings through their experiences, space acquires meaning and is transformed into place. Places vary in scale and significance but the most important place for all people is their *homeland* – "the region (city or countryside) that supports their livelihood" (p. 149). People become attached to places. They develop what Tuan refers to as *affective bonds* with places and experience a sense of belonging in and to places, especially their homeland.

Sense of Place and Place Attachment

These affective bonds or emotional attachments to a setting are referred to as *sense of place*. Place becomes a center of meaning or field of care as individuals and groups experience the setting and attach meaning and importance to it (Tuan, 1977). Relph (1976) holds a similar view and he describes places as:

> fusions of human and natural order . . . significant centers of experience. . . They are based on directly experienced phenomena of the lived world, full of meanings, with real objects, [and] ongoing activities . . . and [they] become important sources of individual and communal identity, often profound centers of human existence with deep emotional and psychological ties. (p. 141)

Sense of place, therefore, can be seen as a holistic construct comprised of the physical setting, the human activities that occur there, and human social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) that are rooted in that setting (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995).

Place attachment describes the positive affective bonds that people develop with environmental settings; however, the term is often used interchangeably in the literature with sense of place, belongingness, and rootedness (Altman & Low, 1992; Hammitt & Stewart, 1996). The overlap in terminology reflects the possible ranges of place attachments that people can develop. Attachments can vary in intensity, according to Relph (1976), from alienation (outsidedness) to complete identification with a place (insidedness). Sense of place can also vary in intensity from belonging (affiliation), to attachment (special affinity), and finally to commitment or willingness to take

action for a place (Shamai, 1991). Fried (2000), after more than 40 years of studying people-place relationships, concludes that people and whole societies can also develop profound attachments to the point where they will cling to remnants of a place even after it has been destroyed (socially and physically) and no longer exists.

Process of Place Attachment

Why then do human beings develop people-place relationships? Riley (1992) points out that "attachment to the environment is often considered to be both inherent and invariant in the human species" (p. 14). He suggests that there are three major schools of thought explaining the origins of place attachment, and adds that a comprehensive understanding involves a combination of all three possible explanations.

The first approach is a *biological approach* which considers attachment as merely an evolutionary mechanism related to our survival instincts. Spaces and places meet our need for food, shelter, and safety and through evolution, according to this approach; people have developed attachments to landscapes that provide these basic essentials (Riley, 1992). This approach fails to explain how individuals and groups develop attachments to specific locations when similar locations are also available. It also does not account for the emotion and meaning that places evoke for people.

The second approach is a *cultural approach* that views culture as the basis for attachment. Culture itself may develop as an adaptation to a specific landscape or the landscape may be shaped and transformed by the technologies and the

attitudes of a culture. A culture may also adopt specific elements in a regional landscape as being representative of aspects of their culture and become attached to these elements as an expression of their collective identity (Riley, 1992).

The third approach, based on the developmental theorist Jean Piaget's (1954) classic *Cognitive Development Theory*, is that place attachment is learned in childhood and is a critical part of human development. This *individual experiences approach* acknowledges that attachments to place begin to develop in early childhood as the child learns through experiences and social relationships about the world and his place in it. At first this learning is centered in the home and with close family and then it expands to include more places and more people (Riley, 1992).

Over time these experiences and the memories of these experiences form, what Edward Tolman (1948), a behaviour psychologist, termed as *cognitive maps* or *belief systems*. Human beings use these mind maps to perceive, comprehend, and navigate their world and make sense of their day-to-day existence. These mind maps not only shape how people see their place but how they see themselves as well. These mental maps also serve as a perceptual compass for gauging change and evaluating circumstances. They shape values, beliefs, and expectations and in turn these cognitive benchmarks govern how people view and experience life and change in their environment (Kitchin, 1994; Riley, 1992).

People form patterns of affection (or rejection) for landscapes, settings, and places based on their childhood experiences and these patterns remain throughout a person's life (Kitchin, 1994; Marcus, 1992; Riley, 1992). This

preference for a certain environment according to Kaplan and Kaplan (1982) "is not an idle whim, but an indication of what is healthy and supportive of people" (p. ix). Individuals "actively seek preferable settings (choice); and they also attempt to maintain and improve what they have (control)" (p. viii) through personal and territorial boundary maintenance. Although ideal settings are rare, people generally prefer locations that make sense to them and which permit them to be effective and meet their own needs.

Environmental experiences shape human development and numerous studies have explored the connection between childhood place experiences and their conscious and subconscious influence on adult attitudes and behaviours. For example, Marcus (1992) found that architects often unconsciously incorporate features of their favorite childhood places in their designs and studies conducted by Tanner (1980), Palmer (1993), and Chawla (1998) all conclude that environmentalists and environmental educators can often trace their interest in the field back to outdoor childhood place experiences.

Riley (1992) agrees that childhood experiences of place have a powerful influence on people-place relationships and that biology and culture also play a significant role in place attachment. However, he argues that "whether attachment…is based upon biology, culture, or individual experience, it is memory that makes [place attachment] more than a simple stimulus-response phenomenon" (p. 18). Memories are accumulated over time, and place acts as a repository of memories and meanings as well as a symbol or marker for remembering.

Memories of Place

Places can become memorable through a one time significant event or through a series of routine everyday experiences (Kitchin, 1994; Riley, 1992). What makes a place memorable varies with the setting, the individual or group, the experiences, and the meanings attached to them. Furthermore, a sense of place, is a holistic construct comprised of the physical setting, the human activities that occur there, and the human social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) that are rooted in that setting (Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995). Although this definition is widely accepted, a great deal of debate continues, regarding how the environment, experiences, and meanings influence people's sense of place and their attachments to place.

Role of the Setting

Ryden (1993) views sensory knowledge of a physical setting or location as a critical aspect in memory formation and attachment to place. People gain knowledge of a place through direct experiences and that:

> knowledge of place is grounded in those aspects of the environment which we appreciate through the senses . . . color, texture, slope, quality of light, the feel of wind, the sounds and scents carried by that wind. (p. 38)

Relph (2007) extends the idea of the qualities of a place by describing sense of place as a synaesthetic combination of "sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, memory, imagination and anticipation" (p. 19). He conceptualizes sense of place as a faculty or "ability to grasp and appreciate the distinctive qualities of places" (p. 19). This ability, he suggests, is partially instinctive but it can "also be learned

and developed through careful observation and openness to and appreciation of the differences between places" (p. 19).

Sebba's findings (1991) are similar to those of Relph. She conducted empirical research on adult recollections of childhood place experiences, and discovered that "almost all adults [in her study] identify the most significant place in their childhood with the outdoors" (p. 395). Children become engaged in activities in the natural environment and an "experience in which the child is actively involved, with his body, his senses, and his awareness, is likely to be etched in memory for a long time" (p. 395). Sebba argues, therefore, that the quality of the natural environment and the experiences it affords plays a significant role in the process of place attachment for children and adults. A similar perspective is offered by Stedman (2003) who believes that the characteristics of the physical environment may themselves influence sense of place by acting as a "basis of meanings, which in turn affect[s] attachment and satisfaction" (p. 682).

Role of Social Relationships

Other authors view place attachment as more than an attachment of people to places or landscape features and instead see social relationships as playing a major role in the process. For example, Hufford (1992), Marcus (1992), Pellow (1992), and Altman and Low (1992), all support the idea, in some way, that "attachment to places may be based on or incorporate other people - family, friends, community, and even a culture" (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 7). Places can become symbols that represent social experiences and relationships. Places can

also foster these relationships and place meanings. Altman and Low (1992) conclude that

> [p]laces are, therefore, repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place quo place, to which people are attached. (p. 7)

Similarly, Riley (1992) completed an extensive review of landscape literature and found that it was the experiences and social relationships rather than environmental features that were remembered and reported in adult recollections of place. In his earlier work *Reflections on the Landscape of Memory* (1979) he suggested that when people remember a childhood place they often associate it with the emotion or mood that it represents and he raised the question that

> [w]hen we recall the comfort and security of childhood's twilight backyard, is it because of a desire for direct pleasurable environmental stimulus, or because we seek the emotion once associated with place? Adult recall might show not a simple desire for the pleasure of place but a need for the nurture or support experienced there. (p. 13)

Indeed, place memories appear to be most salient when they involve positive shared experiences but experiences can also be solitary and unpleasant. Settings or environments can be oppressive or restrictive, can "discourage social experiences" (Riley, 1992, p. 20) rather than foster them, and can hinder people-place attachments.

Eisenhauer et al. (2000) studied place attachment and the use of public lands and found a similar relationship between social interactions and place

attachment. The reasons people gave for considering a place special were related to: family/friends (36.9%), environmental features/characteristics of place (34.2%), convenience/ownership (9.7%), recreational use (6.9%), personal fulfillment/tranquility (6.3%), and economic/consumptive issues (4.5%). Social ties and relationships appear to have a significant influence on the meaning people attach to places, and in this study, people considered places special most often "because of interactions at these locales among family or friends, family activities, family traditions or heritage, family homesteading, or simply because of memories associated with these people at these places" (p. 432). Eisenhauer's study also showed social/cultural differences in the activities that people from different communities engaged in on public lands (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). This research raises the question then do social/cultural relationships play a similar role in place attachments for First Nations people who depend upon public land that was once exclusively their homeland, for their livelihood and the maintenance of their spiritual and cultural practices?

Influence of Culture

The process of place attachment is influenced by a person's culture and culture is the means by which a group socially reproduces itself (Erickson, 1976). Furthermore, the shared experiences, meanings, and collective memories of a culture form the framework for the development of sense of place (Riley, 1992; Shamai, 1991). Although there are a multitude of different definitions for the word "culture" the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002) suggests that:

> culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. (p. 1)

Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) note that "[p]laces are embedding because they… have meanings and values associated with them that are passed along to the individual from, and shared with, the social group" (p. 382). Rotenberg (1993) also recognizes the significance of these shared values and meanings and suggests that people develop social places or *communal sites* based on these collective sentiments, multiple layers of everyday meanings, and individual and collective sedimented history. Similarly, Agnew and Duncan (1989) use the term *locale* to describe the communal site that is "the setting for everyday routine social interactions provided in a place" (p. 2). A collective sense of place, they argue, develops as "identification with a place [is] engendered by living [or otherwise interacting] with it" (p. 2). Moreover, the way in which the people of a culture "make a living and use their environment has direct ties to their ideas, artifacts, core values, and meanings" (Biery-Hamilton, 2001, p. 178). The nature and quality of the lived environment, therefore, influences the cultural practices, the everyday experiences, and the meaning of these experiences.

The inter-generational transmission of values, practices, meanings, memories, and traditions are based on a culture's view of itself and the world. Ongoing social and cultural practices foster *social and cultural continuity* across time that provides the stability, predictability, and collective identity that is

associated with people and their place (Champagne, 2007). Conversely, culture and place are dynamic and not static phenomena. In fact, places and people evolve over time (Csonka & Schweitzer, 2004). However, the continuity of place meanings help buffer the impacts of change by providing a link to the past and routine in the present "that gives the future comprehensibility" (Low, 1992, p. 169).

Erikson (1994) referred to this buffering role of culture as a type of "emotional insulation" (p. 153) that "help[s] people camouflage the actual risks of the world around them - to help them edit it in such a way that the perils pressing in on all sides are screened out of their line of vision as they go about their daily rounds" (p. 152). Without this emotional insulation people see their world, their place in it, and their future differently. Dangers (real and imagined) can dominate the view and issues of trust, security, and predictability can dominate thinking and leave people feeling exposed, isolated, and vulnerable

Symbolic Relationship between People and Their Place

Culture can play such a prominent role in bonding people together in their place that Low (1992) suggests there is a "a symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/ affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's and group's understanding of and relationship to the environment" (p. 165). Although strong individualistic feelings often arise within a culture, "these feelings are embedded in a cultural milieu" (p. 165), and collective practices and beliefs transform "the experience of a space or piece of land into a culturally meaningful and shared

symbol, that is, place" (p. 166). Places can become symbols of cultural identity that reflect experiential, sociopolitical, historical, and cultural meanings and link people together in a common bond with their land, their place in the world.

These symbolic linkages, according to Low (1992), can be defined as the cultural processes of place attachment and can be grouped into two sets of categories. The first is related to familial, social, economic, and political linkages and includes genealogical, loss of place, and economic/political attachments. *Genealogical place attachments* are formed through history, family, and community linkages that are acquired by being born into a place, marrying into a place, or living in a place for an extended period of time. Genealogical linkages, in fact all cultural linkages, are strongest in social groups, such as many Aboriginal cultures, that have lived for centuries in their traditional territories and have developed unique correspondence (language, cultural practices, and narratives) to express long-held place meanings and values. A breakdown in this correspondence can lead "to another form of place attachment based on the *loss or destruction of place*" (p. 169) (emphasis added). Loss of place will be discussed in detail later in this chapter but for now it is important to note that people can be attached to places that have been destroyed and can share deep collective feelings for places that exist only as memories (Fried, 2000). Low (1992) suggests that people also form *economic place attachments* or utilitarian relationships with the land through ownership (individual and collective) or by earning a living working on the land. Ownership of land is a powerful expression of economic place

attachment and "[c]itizenship and political participation are often related to land ownership, in that land gives a person literally a 'place' in society" (p. 170).

The second classification, developed by Low (1992), involves *ideological linkages* based on religious, moral, and mythological dimensions of place attachment. Ideological linkages are formed through "a culture's religious and mythological conceptions of the world and the structural correspondence of these ideas with the landscape" (p. 170). *Cosmology* is an expression of spiritual beliefs and places can take on a sacredness that embodies these deep spiritual meanings. *Pilgrimages* to spiritual places, festivals, and *ceremonies* are part of the spiritual development of members of a culture and are important avenues for the inter-generational transmission of spirituality and moral behaviour. Moral lessons can also be taught through "moral tales linked to the landscape" (p. 173). These place *narratives*, stories and myths include family and political history and can "function as a type of cultural place attachment in that people's linkage to the land is through the vehicle of the story and is identified through place naming and languages" (pp. 173-174).

Context of Meanings

Although culture plays a significant role in place attachment, Rotenberg (1993) suggests that cultural meanings, in fact all meanings including place meanings, are historically situated. To be fully understood then, meanings must be seen as "either changed or unchanged from some earlier understanding" (p. xiv). Meanings are shaped by the broader social, economic, and political conditions of the time period in which they are formed and reflect the lived reality of day-to-

day life in a place. Consequently, "[e]ach generation reinterprets its world based on the inherited understandings of the past and the experiences of the present" (p. xiv). Furthermore, Eyles (1989) contends that places, people, and their everyday lives do not exist in a vacuum and that places are defined by not only the ordinary people who live and interact with them but also through the power of others. Government authorities, community organizations, and the policies and processes that they institute create opportunities as well as constraints that influence place meanings and people-place relationships and attachments.

Disruptions in Place Attachment

What happens to people then when places are changed? Place attachment, Brown and Perkins (1992) point out, involves psychological processes that "normally reflect the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional embeddedness individuals experience in their socio-physical environments" (p. 279). Once this embeddedness or place attachment is established, *disruptions* and the loss of attachments have profound impacts on people. Disruptions of place attachment, Brown and Perkins define as "*noticeable transformations* in place attachment due to *noticeable changes* in the people, processes, or place" (p. 284) [emphasis added]. These changes and transformations can result from natural disasters or human induced causes and when they occur they alter people-place relationships and emotional and psychological connections and attachments.

Brown and Perkins (1992) further argue that places and place attachments provide people with "anchors in life" (p. 280). Places and the artifacts that they contain both "reflect and shape people's understanding of who they are as

individuals and as members of groups" (p. 280). Places, therefore, influence individual and communal identities and inter-personal relationships. When place attachment disruptions occur individuals can lose their meaning in life and their ability to relate to and connect with one another. They "struggle to define their losses in order to identify what types of connections will provide them with a meaningful relationship to the world" (p. 280). The old attachments and previous social networks are not "literally replaced" (p. 280), nor are individual and community identities easily rebuilt after a disruption. Places and their meanings are also not easily transferrable or replaceable.

Brown and Perkins (1992), furthermore, assert that place also provides individuals with stability, familiarity, security, "predictability, and order in knowing what to expect from the environment" (p. 280). At the same time, place attachments and the stability of place provide people with a sense of control and ability to manage and respond to their environment as they move through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and their senior years. In addition, individuals often "anticipate and expect changes in life circumstance" (p. 282) and place attachments frequently adjust automatically without creating disruptions. However, when disruptions occur and individuals lose their ability to make sense of their world or to have some measure of control over their life circumstances, they cling to their remaining "thread of continuity or stability" (p. 282) and may become immobilized and overwhelmed by the changes. In addition, the belief systems that individuals have developed may no longer apply and in the extreme, people may seek escape through alcohol and drugs, suicide, or other maladaptive

behaviours (p. 282). Referring to his classic study of the Buffalo Creek catastrophe where a dam collapsed killing 175 people and leaving 4,000 homeless, Erickson (1994) described how environmental damage can lead to community wide *collective trauma*. Collective trauma affects the functioning of community and represents a loss of social support that damages a community's ability to adjust to the changes and to work together in rebuilding their lives.

The symptoms of disruption can vary from grief and mourning to confusion, sadness, depression, homesickness, fear, anger, anomie, alienation, and even full blown post traumatic stress disorder depending on the nature of the disruption and the degree of loss (Erikson, 1976, 1994; Low, 1992; Oliver-Smith, 1986). Characteristics of place attachment disruptions include a deep sense of loss, uncertainty, and vulnerability. There is a common psychological need to regain the stability and continuity of the past, to re-establish a sense of control over the present, and to reaffirm identity, self-worth, and self-efficiency before people can begin to visualize or imagine a future beyond what is the present reality (Brown & Perkins, 1992).

Framework for Understanding Disruptions in Place Attachments

Disruptions in place attachments can result from burglaries, voluntary, and non-voluntary relocations (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Loss of place and place meanings can also be deliberately created as a strategy of war (Fried, 2000; Hewitt, 1983; Porteus & Smith, 2001). They can occur because of administrative and political decisions (Porteus, 1989; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996) and with increasing frequency they are occurring because of environmental changes

resulting from climate change, environmental accidents, and other consequences of industrial activity (Albrecht, 2005, Albrecht et al., 2007; Erickson, 1976, 1994; Kirsch, 2001; Oliver-Smith, 1986).

Compounding the effects of disruption, Brown and Perkins (1992) assert, is that people often do not recognize the significance of their attachments to a place until a disruption occurs and they may also be unable to identify the source of the disruption or agree on how to deal collectively with the impacts. Moreover, place attachment "operates in the background of awareness" (p. 283) which also makes it difficult to assess. They recommend, therefore, that researchers use open-ended exploratory interviews to understand how attachments function, "to draw out the meaning and experience of attachment" (p. 283), and to "enable individuals to process and articulate their losses" (p. 283) when disruptions occur.

Brown and Perkins (1992) describe the process of disruption in place attachments as involving three distinct although interrelated phases. The first is the *pre-disruption phase* in which place attachments are formed. The second phase involves the actual *disruption*, the loss of attachment, and the stress that the loss creates. The third phase is a recovery or *post-disruption phase* in which people begin to cope with their lost attachments and attempt to establish new attachments and rebuild their lives.

Factors That Influence Disruptions and Recovery

Brown and Perkins (1992) also found that in place disruption literature, regardless of the type of disruption, certain factors appear to "impinge on the disruption experience" (p. 296). Studies of disruption suggest that the stronger the pre-disruption attachments to place the "more devastating" (p. 298) the effects of disruptions are. In addition, the vulnerability to disruption and the ability to recover from disruption are influenced by pre-disruption resources. Poor and isolated groups have fewer resources and may experience disruptions more severely. Furthermore, "[a] lack of resources can compound the problems of coping and reattachment as well as decrease the aid given to victims after a disaster" (p. 298) or disruption.

Also in the literature, Brown and Perkins (1992) point out, that there appears to be a commonly expressed need, regardless of the nature of the disruption, the setting, or the culture, for an "acknowledgement of the value of the losses" (p. 298) that people have experienced. Failure to do so and the insensitivity of authority figures shows disregard for people and their values and ignores the fact that "place attachment provides anchors of meaning in resident's lives by symbolizing and sustaining self, family, or home" (p. 298). Disregard of the impacts marginalizes the victims. This affects the intensity of the disruption that is experienced and limits the possibility of recovery.

The degree of change, the amount of familiarity in the post-disruption environment, and the amount of *dissensus* that is present all appear to influence response and recovery. Dissensus or lack of agreement about what is occurring

and how best to respond can disable individuals and whole communities as Brown and Perkins (1992) explain that

> communities often become "disabled" in the face of government, corporate, and media hegemony and widespread 'dissensus' [can occur] among victims regarding the nature, origins, and remedies for the disaster. Dissensus impedes community action . . . Dissensus is more likely when: predisaster community identity is weak or diffuse (e.g., with heterogeneity, geographic dispersion, absence of formal organizations) or [is] dependent on those responsible for the disaster, the disaster itself has socially and/or spatially isolated impacts; and postdisaster community organizations cannot agree on the nature of the disaster or become worn down by bureaucratic delays. (p. 299)

Although the Brown and Perkins (1992) study focuses on disruptions occurring from burglaries and voluntary and involuntary relocations, they convincingly argue that the model may apply to other disruptions that have different temporal and social scales. They assert that this framework may be useful in understanding disruptions occurring from deteriorations in family relations, perceived "safety, civility, and appearance of the neighbourhood" (p. 300) and other changes in people, place, or processes. They also argue that the model could be applied to "environmental problems [that] have a more gradual character" (p. 300) and suggest that perhaps gradual change might permit adaptation rather than lead to disruption symptoms.

Conclusion

Using the Brown and Perkins (1992) framework and a two month field study in which I lived in the community of Chateh and conducted 20 in-depth interviews with young adults, this research takes an exploratory approach to

understand how the Dene Tha' people, particularly their young people, are being impacted by industrial development. This study looks first at the pre-disruption phase when the participants formed their place attachments and then the *"noticeable transformations* in place attachment due to *noticeable changes* in the people, processes, or place" (p. 284) that these young adults have experienced. It also searches for evidence of individual and community recovery and examines factors that may be influencing recovery. The following chapter provides details about the methods used in conducting this exploration.

METHODS

Introduction

This collaborative research project is designed to capture the insights of a group of First Nations people living with increasing industrial development in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta. A qualitative approach was used to gather their personal life stories and allowed for the intensive exploration of the research questions and analysis of the participants' viewpoints and understandings. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, data collection methods, data analysis strategies, and the documentation and dissemination approach that guided this research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

My Perspective

The starting point for this research is my interest in people and places which developed from when I was a child growing up on my family's market garden in a small rural community in Ontario. I was fortunate to have spent the majority of my childhood days playing outdoors and exploring the forest that was close to my home. I also went hunting, fishing, camping, and berry picking as a child and I developed a real passion for the outdoors and for travelling. As an adult I have lived in more than a dozen rural towns and villages in Alberta and British Columbia and I have always been fascinated by stories about the history of places and the people who live in them. The focus of my research work, therefore, continues my fascination with the connection between people and their places.

Research Design

The Centre of Excellence, Sustainable Forest Management Network (SFMN) provided funding for this initiative as part of the 2006-07 project – *Barriers to the Management of Cumulative Effects of Development in the Treaty 8 Region of Canada.* The specific research detailed in this thesis dovetails with other components of the SFMN project related to cumulative effects assessment, modeling, and policy analysis. Furthermore, this project also is a collaborative community-based effort involving the Dene Tha' First Nation, my supervisor Dr. Brenda Parlee, and myself.

An initial planning meeting for this study was held on June 5, 2007 with the Dene Tha' First Nation leadership to discuss the research needs of the community and the feasibility of developing the project. Arrangements were made for me to begin fieldwork starting June 25, 2007. The leadership felt that attending the Dene Tha' Annual Assembly, taking place during that week, would provide me with an opportunity to meet community members in a social setting and participate in this important cultural event before meeting with the Community Steering Committee to finalize the research plans.

The Steering Committee was chosen by the Dene Tha' leadership and is comprised of one Elder and several community leaders. The committee met July 16, 2007 to discuss research ideas and develop plans for the project. I was originally interested in looking at the inter-generational differences in the place attachments of Elders, parents, and young people in Dene Tha' communities. During the discussion, however, it became apparent that the project would best meet the needs

of the Dene Tha' people by focusing solely on the young adults in Chateh and the social and cultural impacts they are experiencing. Chateh, the largest and most remote Dene Tha' settlement, is located in an area that has experienced decades of industrial development, and the community is concerned about the future of their young people. In light of this, revisions were made to my initial proposal and a new focus was developed. Once the project details were formalized, a community member was hired as a research assistant and an interpreter for the study and the Research Agreement was submitted and approved by the Band Council (Appendix A). An Ethics Application was also submitted and approved by the Human Ethics Board of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics at the University of Alberta.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of three components: secondary data, field observations, and one-on-one personal interviews with 20 young adults in Chateh Alberta.

Secondary Data

The secondary data compiled throughout the research project was drawn from websites, government documents, historical records, newspaper articles, and previous research studies conducted in the Treaty 8 Region and elsewhere. The preliminary secondary data gathered prior to the project provided a general overview of industrial development in the region as well as the historical, cultural, and political context for the study. As the project progressed new sources were

identified and other areas of importance became apparent. In addition, during the analysis of the findings more secondary information was collected to further develop the background as well as support and clarify the insights of the participants.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork portion of data collection took place from June 25, 2007 until August 19, 2007. I lived in Chateh and participated in the day-to-day activities of the community for a month and a half before I began to conduct the interviews. During my stay I attended a wedding, a hand game competition, the Annual Assembly, and the National Day of Action. I helped paint a room that the young people in Chateh had hoped would some day become a permanent youth center and I learned how to make dried moose meat. I met informally with service workers, chatted with seniors, Elders, adults, and children, and generally experienced everyday life in Chateh. I accompanied an Elder and some community members in examining a disturbed ancestral grave site in a farmer's field. I also visited other Dene Tha' communities (Meander River, Bushe River, and the historic Hay Lakes area) as well as non-Aboriginal local towns (Zama City, Rainbow, and High Level). In addition, I traveled to more than two dozen industrial development sites within the region and talked informally with forestry, oil and gas industry workers, highway construction workers, residents, and tourists.

Interviews

The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the young adults took place in mid-August 2007 in the community of Chateh. The interview guide (Appendix B) used during the interviews was designed to explore the following three research questions:

1. How did the young adults develop their sense of place and what does their place mean to them? (Pre-disruption phase)

2. What transformations in people, place, and processes are they experiencing? (Disruption phase)

3. How are these transformations changing the way the young adults experience and understand their place and their future? (Post-disruption phase)

The actual interview questions were open-ended and were constructed to illicit detailed personal responses. Care was also taken in the wording of each question so that the participants were not led to respond in any specific way but were encouraged to express their understanding of their everyday life and experiences.

Sampling Method

The participants in this study were selected using *purposive sampling* methods including *nonproportional quota, heterogeneity,* and *snowball sampling* (Trochim, 2005). Establishing a nonproportional quota of equal male-female participants was chosen to ensure that the sample would represent both genders fairly equally. All candidates had to be 18 to 25 years of age; however, no quotas were required for individual age categories within this age range. Heterogeneity sampling was also used in order to include as diverse a range of participants as

possible. The population of Chateh consists of kinship units and participants were selected to reflect the variety of families living in the community. In addition, because the houses are widely dispersed, there is no common meeting area, and some people have no phone service, snowball sampling was also incorporated. This method is effective in reaching inaccessible groups or people who may not be included in the sample because they are unaware of the project (Trochim, 2005). Participants and community leaders, therefore, were asked to recommend and help contact young adults who might be interested in joining the research initiative.

To advertise the project and recruit participants, posters were placed in the local convenience store and on the band office door a week prior to the interviews. An invitation to participate was also broadcast daily on the local radio station throughout the interview process. In addition, people were asked to spread the word about the project to other members of the community who might not have heard about it but who might want to participate in the research.

Description of Participants

Eleven females and nine males volunteered to take part in this study. The median age of the interviewees was 21 years. Three of the participants had completed their high school education and almost 45 percent were either employed full-time or had summer jobs. Two participants had children, and with one exception, all of the young adults were living with their parents or other relatives. The sample included representation from 18 different kinship units within the community of Chateh.

Interview Process

During initial contact potential interviewees were screened to determine if they matched the criteria for the sample. In the screening process, the purpose of the study was explained and a general summary of the interview questions was given. Selected participants were then asked to choose a convenient interview time and date. They were also asked if they preferred being interviewed at the band office or at another location and if they preferred being interviewed in English or in Dene with the use of an interpreter. All participants chose to be interviewed in English and at the band office.

Informed Consent

At the beginning of each interview, I explained the project and read the information sheet and the consent form to the participant. Because of the varying educational backgrounds of the interviewees, this verbal process was followed consistently to ensure that each participant understood the purpose of the project and their rights. After all questions had been answered and informed consent had been given, the recorded interview was conducted. All participants received a photocopy of the information sheet and their consent form at the end of the interview.

Pilot and Interview Procedure

The first two interviews were conducted as pilots to determine if the questions and format were effective. Only minor adjustments to the interview questions were required and the pilot interviews were, therefore, included in the

study. Each interview took approximately one half to a full hour to complete. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions in a conversational style. Silence and asking for elaboration were used as prompts to elicit additional information (Trochim, 2005). Participants were reminded that they could refuse to answer any or all of the questions if they were uncomfortable about responding and they could withdraw at any time without any repercussions.

Interview Follow-up

A month after the interviews I attempted to make follow-up calls to each of the young adults who took part in the interviews. I wanted to ensure that the participants had an additional opportunity to ask any questions that they may have had about the research or to withdraw from the project. I wanted to ensure that they were comfortable with their contribution to this research. I also wanted to verify information such as date of birth, educational status, changes in employment, and contact information. I was able to reach only fourteen of the 20 participants directly as some did not have phone service and others who had phones were away during repeated calls.

Data Analysis

Once the follow-up was completed the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and reviewed using the analysis procedure for qualitative data recommended by Silverman (2006). I replayed the original tape recordings a total of six times during the analysis process to summarize case-by-case responses, to confirm similarities and differences in the interviews, and to gain overall

impressions. The transcribed text was then coded and re-coded to identify the major and minor themes and to highlight unusual or atypical insights. Finally, all the interview responses were grouped by themes under their respective interview question and a plain language findings summary was produced for community confirmation and discussion (Appendix C).

Validation and Confirmation

A community input meeting was held on May 26, 2008 to review the research findings with the Dene Tha' Band Council in order to ensure the credibility of the results and to gain further understandings. The Council noted that the summary of the findings matched what they were seeing on a community level. An open house was also held the following day (May 27, 2008) in Chateh and community members were asked to contribute their thoughts about the changes that are occurring and their aspirations for the future of their community (Appendix D). Their concerns and experiences of change also reflected the insights expressed by the young adults who had participated in the interviews.

Also during the open-house all of the participants in the study were invited to meet with me in private to review their transcripts and remove any information that they felt was inappropriate to include in written reports. Only five of the 20 participants chose to examine their transcripts or receive a copy of their documents. Following community confirmation and validation, the findings of the original interviews minus the requested omissions were then analyzed using sense of place and place attachment theory and the disruptions of place attachment framework proposed by Brown and Perkins (1992).

Documentation of Findings

In order to protect the identity of the young adults who were interviewed, care was taken to remove names and references to personal situations. Each participant was assigned a number and quotes were referenced using the capital letter "R" for respondent and the participant's assigned number. Furthermore, the quotations used in this thesis include the original spoken text without correction of grammar. I felt that it is important to capture the different ways that the participants expressed their ideas and that altering the quotes might also alter the meaning that the interviewees were expressing.

Dissemination of Findings

This collaborative community-based research was developed under a formal research agreement between myself, my supervisor Dr. Brenda Parlee, and the leadership of the Dene Tha' First Nation (Appendix A). Under this agreement the raw research data is the property of the Dene Tha' First Nation; however, as researchers we are permitted to use and access the data for the purpose of developing my Masters thesis and publications to satisfy the project's funding requirements. It is agreed that all parties, including interviewees, will work together to determine if any information is proprietary and should not be shared in public documents. The Dene Tha' First Nation will also have an opportunity to review any document that is to be made public and as researchers we have agreed to make best efforts to address any concerns raised about the material prior to publication.

Of primary importance is the dissemination of the findings to the Dene Tha' First Nation and the community of Chateh and its young people. It is anticipated

that this research will provide useful documentation about the effects of industrial development that may help community leaders formulate land use, community, regional planning, and management initiatives. Therefore, a series of plain language reports and educational materials will be developed for the community in conjunction with this thesis document.

Limitations

As is typical with all research endeavors, this study was conducted with certain limitations and as much as possible these limitations were anticipated and considered during the development of this project. Due to time and budget considerations the field study was confined to a two month period during the summer of 2007 and the sample was limited to 20 participants.

Another limitation consideration of this particular project is the remoteness of the community. Chateh is 682 kilometers northwest of Edmonton and winter travel is challenging even with good road conditions. Due to the distance ongoing contact with the community was limited to email and phone conversations after the field study was completed. When the community input meeting was held on May 26 and 27, 2008 discussion time was also limited due to time and travel-related considerations.

Another challenge of this project relates to its cross-cultural nature. There is a risk of the researcher misinterpreting the findings and overlooking important features that should be included in the research. I attempted to address this concern by participating in the two month field study, which provided me with an opportunity to familiarize myself with local issues and to build relationships with

people in order to establish the level of trust that is essential in research conducted with and for people rather than about people. In addition, to avoid serious omissions or errors community feedback and discussion of the findings was incorporated into the research design. Furthermore, the Community Steering Committee provided critical direction regarding the scope of the project and also helped to set local priorities by determining that the focus of the project should be on the young adults and their experiences.

To overcome the anticipated language barrier between the interviewees and the researcher a local Dene and English speaking research assistant was hired as an interpreter. Since all of the young adults who volunteered to participate spoke fluent English, translations were not necessary and the research assistant was assigned other tasks within the project. Furthermore, the assistant's contract was limited to the field study period and unfortunately written translation of the summary of findings and other educational materials into the Dene language was not possible. It is hoped that the final presentation of the findings to the community will be translated by an interpreter so that all Dene Tha' people can fully hear and understand what was said.

Conclusion

Despite the anticipated and actual limitations of this research project I believe that this research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the impacts of industrial development in this region. The findings reflect the understandings of the young adults who participated in this study and who are living with the day-to-day reality of the changes that they themselves are

experiencing. Furthermore, this research is qualitative and its strength lies in the depth of information it provides about the phenomenon being studied. The following chapter provides a summary of the findings of this study.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This research seeks to understand the impacts of industrial development on the everyday lives of the First Nations people living in Chateh, a Dene Tha' community in northern Alberta. This specific thesis chapter describes the participants and their setting and then summarizes the research findings from the field study and personal interviews conducted during the summer of 2007. The summary begins with the participants' memories of growing up in Chateh and their childhood place experiences. The second section deals with the changes that they have noticed in the environment and in their community. The third section summarizes the participants' views and thoughts about the future. The reader is reminded that in order to protect the identity of the young adults who were interviewed, names are not used in this summary. Instead, each participant is assigned a number and quotes are referenced using the capital letter "R" for respondent followed by the participant's assigned number.

Description of the Participants

The 20 young adults who participated in this project were between 18 and 25 years old and were all born between 1982 and 1989. There were eleven females and nine males who volunteered to take part. Three of the young adults had completed their high school education and almost 45 percent were either employed full-time or had summer jobs. Two participants had children, and with one exception, all of the young people were living with their parents or other relatives. The sample included representation from 18 different kinship units

within the community and all of the participants had either lived their entire childhood in Chateh or had moved to the community during their childhood years. All of the young adults spoke fluent English.

Historical Context

The participants in this study have not directly experienced the disruptions that have occurred in the past. They did not live throughout their traditional territory as nomadic hunters and gatherers like their grandparents and countless generations before them. They were not alive during the fur-trade era nor did they experience the disruptions caused by the signing of the adhesion to Treaty 8 in 1900 and the subsequent move to reserves in the 1950's and 1960's. They did not develop their sense of place by living in a church run boarding school like many of their parents. They were not born yet when their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers marched on the Alberta legislature asking for better housing, education, health services, and economic development. They also did not experience the promise of a better future, jobs, and an end to poverty that had accompanied the protest and the discovery of oil in the region in 1965. Rather, the young adults in this study were born between 1982 and 1989 and developed their sense of place by living in the community of Chateh during a time when the community has increasingly become surrounded by industrial activity. The attachments they developed were influenced by their personal experiences and by the experiences, meanings, and collective memories of a culture that has been shaped by a series of disruptions in the past.

Description of the Setting and the People

Unlike their grandparents who were semi-nomadic, lived in small family units of 10 to 12 people, and traveled throughout their traditional territories in search of seasonally available game, the young adults in this study lived in permanent homes on the Hay Lake Reserve #209 in the community of Chateh which was formally called Assumption (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). They grew up in a remote community that had a population of 785 people in 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1986). The population was comprised almost entirely of Dene Tha' families and the only non-Aboriginal people in Chateh were the police officers, the nurse, the priest, the nuns, and the school teachers. Unlike many of their parents who had lived in a church-run boarding school in the community, these young adults lived with their families and extended families and attended a regular day school up to grade ten. If they attended high school they did so in communities outside of Chateh such as Rainbow Lake, High Level, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, and Edmonton.

When these young people were growing up, Chateh had a church, a band office, a police station, and a court house. There was also a school, a nursing station, a gas station, a grocery store with a small restaurant, and an arena with a youth centre in the community in the early 1990's. The following summaries are the recollections of the young adults about what life was like in their community during that time.

Pre-disruption Phase

Memories of Place and Childhood Place Experiences

All of the young adults recounted stories of learning traditional skills through observing their parents, grandparents, and other relatives and through direct personal experiences. These traditional activities were not exceptional occurrences but rather a routine part of daily family life – "[it] was normal" (R. 12). The participants spoke of learning "about hunting and cultural things – like how to cut up moose meat . . . and how to sew and a lot of things about herbs and how to use them" (R. 1). Their memories about growing up in Chateh included hunting, trapping, and fishing with family and friends. They talked about overnight camping excursions and cooking ducks over an open-fire. They remembered picking "chokecherries, strawberries, and raspberries" (R. 11), "going out of town for picnics" (R. 11), learning how to "skin a rabbit, or a lynx, or beaver too" (R. 7), and going moose hunting. They had stories about fishing, boating, and duck hunting at places such as Hay Lakes, Habay, Rainbow Lake, and Bistcho Lake. Some spoke of the days when they would go out to check the traps and hunt on their grandparents' trapline and stay out at their grandpa's cabin on the land.

Role of the Extended Family

They learned bush skills early in their lives by taking part in routine food gathering and preparation activities with their families. One young woman said "I learned how to shoot a gun when I was eight and I learned how to fish when I was four or five" (R. 8). Their grandparents and extended family were their teachers

and helped raise them. Most of the young adults grew up in multi-generational family clusters within the community and different family members played different roles in their learning and in their lives. A participant explained how the arrangement worked by saying that "[a]fter school I went with my great grandma, my grandma, and her brothers. We all lived in one place, in one area. I kinda learned different things from each one of them" (R. 1). Grandfathers, fathers, uncles, older male cousins and brothers often were the ones who showed the young people how to hunt and trap. Grandmothers and female relatives taught skills such as making dried moose meat, tanning hides, and sewing, gathering wild plants and berries, and trapping small animals.

Life Lessons of Elders

Many young adults spoke about the lessons they learned from *Elders* in the community. Elders were older people who had special knowledge, gifts, or talents and who acted as spiritual, cultural, and moral guides, taught the rules of Dene life, and passed on tradition through oral stories. For example, a young man recounted how he learned life lessons from the Elders

> We had Elders talking to us about how you grow up for the future. They just told us - be nice, don't hurt people, just grow up to be a man and how you grow up to be a man. They talked to us about hunting – pretty cool . . . He just talks about long ago - how they grew up, how they used to be treated. They tell younger kids to grow up the same way and not be bad. I like the Elders' stories – they are really nice. (R. 13)

The participants talked about their Elders with respect. Elders were a source of knowledge, a link to their ancestors, and an avenue to information about how things used to be "back then" (R. 2).

Cultural Celebrations and Spiritual Ceremonies

The Elders and spiritual leaders in the community were also the ones who organized special *Tea Dances* that were a time for prayer and celebration. They arranged community gatherings in which cultural practices, like *Feeding the Fire (*a spiritual ceremony where a sacred fire is kept burning night and day), and *drumming* on moose hide drums provided spiritual renewal and opportunities to interact with community members. They also played *hand games* in which teams would try to guess in whose hand a hidden object was held. These cultural celebrations and ceremonies were important events in the childhood memories of the young adults who participated in this study. They spoke of enjoying these events and looking forward to them. These events were a time when the youth felt a shared culture and a sense of belonging and when the different family groups within the community would come together in friendship.

Significant Childhood Places

The *old school*, the youth centre, and the arena were also focal points in the social life and learning of this generation of young people. The young adults had attended elementary school at the old school and developed childhood friends there before vandals burnt it down. A participant summed up the shared importance of the place by saying "at the old school yard that is where

everybody's memories are" (R. 9). They mentioned going on special outings with the school to places outside the community. These outings were an important part of their childhood as this young person explains: "It was fun. We went to a lot of places. We went for trips to Edmonton, went for camping trips to Sulphur Lake towards Manning. Went ice fishing and stuff like that with the school too" (R. 6).

The youth centre and the arena also played a major role in the social life and development of the children in Chateh as this participant recounts "We had more volleyball, basketball, baseball - everything fun. The arena it was open for hockey, sports, and stuff" (R. 18). The teachers, youth workers, and arena staff became mentors and role models for some of the youth, and one young woman talked about how she had "bonded with a few of the ladies" (R. 2) who worked at the youth centre. These social relationships, activities, and events stood out in the memories of the young adults who took part in this research.

Other Special Places

Other places also had special meaning for the young people. Some mentioned the graveyard as special because their family members and friends were buried there. For some the church was an important place because, as this young woman said, she remembers "going to church with my grandparents every Sunday" (R. 11). There were also places out on land that held special meaning because of the memories the young people had about hunting, trapping, boating, and camping there with their grandparents, family, and friends.

Habay was one of those special places. The families of many of the young people had lived there before moving to Assumption in the 1950's and 1960's. It is

a place to hunt ducks and fish but it is also a place to connect with their history. One young person spoke of its importance for connecting with family and traditions:

> Habay - that is mostly where our parents and grandparents came from and then everyone moved over here. When I go over there I just feel really happy knowing that my mom and dad grew up there and I wish I used to live there. It is not like that today. You had to go to the washroom outside in the winter time, barely had enough to eat. You had to wait for the other people to hunt and wait a long time for them to bring food. I would be more like my dad and grandpa if I had lived there and that is why I wish I would have been born there and raised in the bush. They went through it and I wish I would have went through it like them. (R. 18)

Another place, too, that is important as a viewpoint and a place to think, is up on the hill on the outskirts of Chateh, where "it is nice and quiet" (R. 6). A young person describes this special place:

> On top of the hill there is a cliff. We stand right on the edge - it feels so good . . . There is a tree that is hanging down too. We have a steel rope that is hanging down from it and we swing – swing like we are on the edge of the world. (R. 17)

Many of the young people talked about the same places in their interviews and they shared similar stories about these places and their experiences in them.

Summary of Childhood Memories of Place

From the perspective of this generation of young people born throughout the 1980's, their childhood was "a good childhood" (R. 3), and "a lot of fun" (R. 5), and they spoke about how they "used to do lots of things – there was a lot of

freedom" (R. 12). Throughout their accounts of what it was like growing up in Chateh, four major themes were consistently present. First, community life was centered on traditional activities and all the families were engaged in the bush economy to some degree. The second major theme was related to the importance of the family unit and the value placed on friendship and kinship relationships. The third theme was associated with the nature of daily activities and the significance of learning both by observation and by their own experiences in the natural environment. They had active lives and spent their free time with others, often in the outdoors. They also had organized cultural and social activities that brought the community together. The fourth theme that appeared in all of the interviews was that life here had changed, and now, from their perspective "it's not like that anymore" (R. 4).

Disruption Phase - Living in a Changed and Changing Place

Despite the many changes that are taking place in and around the community of Chateh, the land is still a link to their history and being on the land connects them with their family and past generations of Dene Tha' people. As this young adult said "The land I don't know how to explain it but it does mean a lot to me because it makes me think of my ancestors who grew up around here. I love the country. I love it like crazy" (R. 2). Taking part in hunting, fishing, camping, and trapping activities still provides an important generational connection for the young adults. One young man described this link to the past by saying "It means a lot to me because that is how my grandparents lived, and hunted, and trapped" (R. 11); another young person said that these activities are "a family thing" (R. 7).

The land also provides these young people with a place to turn to for inner renewal as this participant expressed: "It just gives me what I want – peace of mind. It relaxes me and makes me think more about my life" (R. 4). Furthermore, being on the land "keep[s] everybody nice – keep[s] them away from trouble" (R. 13), and, as this participant said, "this is my home" (R. 9). Few are certain, however, about where and what Dene Tha' land is now. Only one young person spoke of the land as being the traditional territory outside the reserve with the following quote:

> It's mine. When we say our land we have the right to hunt on it, go fish. It is all over northern Alberta, parts of BC, and parts of the Territories too. There's more than just the land but I am still learning. I still visit my grandpa and ask him how you do this, how was it back in the day. (R. 18)

For some of the young adults the ancient boundaries and full extent of Dene Tha' territory is unknown, as this young woman said: "It's quite a bit of land but I don't know how much – I'm not sure" (R. 15), while many understand Dene Tha' land to be limited to the boundaries of the reserve, as this participant reported: "The land – half of it was sold a long time ago that changed it too…. Now it is only a small land…. It looks like people are living in this little part - just the reserve now" (R. 3). Not only do these young people express uncertainty about the extent of Dene Tha' land, but many of them feel that the land itself has changed because of increased industrial activity in this region.

Noticeable Changes to Place

These 18 to 25 year olds talked about the place they knew as children as being "beautiful" (R. 4) but that changes started to occur "about 10 to 15 years ago" (R. 3; R. 5; R. 15), and many say that things are different now. Although forestry and oil and gas activities, were taking place in the area on a small scale when they were children, now these industries dominate the landscape. There is "a lot of forestry going on so there's lots of trees missing" (R. 5). One participant described how the increased logging was altering the habitat and changing the biodiversity in the forest:

> They are cutting down all the trees and that's the main thing because all the animals, they disappear once the trees are gone. If there are no trees there are no animals. There is hardly any fish, there is hardly any deer, or moose, or ducks, or geese. There is hardly any birds – usually you see eagles flying around and there is none. There is less beavers and all these wild animals - you hardly see any of them any more. (R. 10)

The young people said that now "there's a lot more oil wells" (R. 12) and "on our land there is pipelines, pump jacks, oil wells, [and] gas plants" (R. 5). They talked about seeing oil on the water and discarded pipes and equipment. They mentioned being concerned about hydrogen sulfide gas (H2S) exposure and the smell that you get when they burn off gas from the wells. They described oil spills left behind by drilling companies and they worry that the oil is leaking into the ponds and rivers. Now, as one young woman said "there are fewer places to go hunting or fishing because people worry if there is any leakage in the oil that got into the water around the place or even that it affects the animals because the animals wander anywhere"

(R. 20). Now, trappers have to go and check their traplines regularly to "see what's going on" (R. 14) in case oil companies have started drilling there. Some of the familiar places where the young adults had camped and hunted when they were children no longer exist. Instead, these places have been fenced off and are replaced by "danger" signs, pump jacks, and oil wells.

The young adults say they "don't know" (R. 6) for certain who is managing the land and making decisions "like allowing rigs and things to be put up around here" (R. 1). Some think perhaps oil companies, or the band, or "the Chief maybe, the councilors maybe" (R. 7) or "the Elders talk" (R. 3) about what is happening. They do know, however, that the oil companies are drilling closer to the community now and as a result the young people are growing concerned about what will happen next, as this participant asks: "They are starting to come on the reserve. You can go for a ride outside of Assumption. The pump jacks are just right over there and there. What if they come closer? What if they move right near the houses?" (R. 12). The young adults are also worried now about the safety of their food supply and the possible contamination of the birds, fish, and animals that they eat.

Some young people, for example, stated that ducks "just go and die by themselves – they just die" (R. 3). The ducks, as a participant said, "seem to be getting sick and I think they don't really taste good anymore" (R. 5). Another young adult explained that:

> Some people are worried that if they eat the ducks and stuff, because a lot of people in the summer hunt ducks, and they fear maybe that the ducks are affected with the oil. One Elder brought it to my attention that when he went

> hunting the duck looked like it had oil on it. So a lot of people are afraid – afraid of eating something that was contaminated. (R. 20)

It is more than just the ducks that are affected – fish and other animals seem unhealthy too and it has changed how people feel about eating wild game as this young adult describes:

> It is not right to the Dene Tha' people because in the olden days they used to hunt for stuff and survive off wild meat and now-a-days you can't even do that. You have to go to High Level and buy groceries and come back. It is not like a long time ago. They'd just go out and kill moose and then they would share with each other. It is not like that now. If they kill something there is always something wrong with it . . . This one guy killed a moose and he was cutting it up and found there was a patch – it looked like puss on the inside of the moose . . . He buried it there because he didn't want to expose it to animals to eat. So he never went hunting ever again and up to this day he doesn't go hunting. (R. 10)

Some young people mentioned that the land itself is not that "healthy" (R.15) anymore and it has changed since they were young.

Noticeable Changes in People and Processes

Loss of Tradition

The young adults who took part in this study talked about how life had changed "over the last 10 to 15 years" (R. 15) in their community too. As one young person said "[to] me it is like our culture is slowly fading away" (R. 5). The cultural celebrations and spiritual ceremonies that were an important part of their childhood are not occurring as often anymore: "The Elders organize the Tea Dances and the Elders are passing away. The drummers aren't into it anymore" (R. 3).

Many of the young people mentioned that they felt that the community is losing its traditions and its unity, as this participant explains:

> There is hardly any Tea Dances and Feed the Fire and stuff like that. There is nothing like that any more . . . Once they put up the date to Feed the Fire they change their mind and nobody shows up. Or if there's a Tea Dance or something nobody shows up. Even the Elders that drum don't even show up and once they do they just give each other mean looks . . . Not like long time ago when they just say hi and start talking. It is not like that anymore. It's changed. (R. 10)

To these young people the community was once a friendly place and "now everything changed" (R. 6). One young person talked about how the loss of cultural traditions was damaging people's relationships with each other:

> It was good but now there is stuff like drinking going on and it is kinda difficult to go around because it's changed a lot since I was young. Like back when I was younger things were different – people were more into their culture and stuff like that and people were friendly back then but now it's different. Some people don't remember their culture and things are different because people aren't nice to other people. (R. 16)

This on-going tension appears to be creating an atmosphere of danger and uncertainty within the community.

Signs of Community Distress

Many of the young people talked about what they saw as a breakdown in the social structure in Chateh. They talked about increasing signs of community distress and the effects of divorce, family feuds, bullying, alcohol and drug addictions, and violence on their day-to-day lives. They shared their feelings about

how stressful and complicated life in the community has become and how people struggle with the changes to their traditional lifestyle, as this participant said:

> I don't think they are taking them too well. I noticed a lot of people don't like change – it scares them so they act out. I think maybe by drinking and vandalizing other's property, terrorizing people, and doing all sorts of things. (R. 15)

One young adult talked about dropping out of school in elementary school because of the bullying. Others shared stories about how families are struggling and the how feuds and disagreements are affecting life here as this participant recounts:

> Lots of people have problems in their families but they have no one to talk to. If they have friends they can listen but there is a lot of problems in the families – it is a secret. A lot of people do get along but there are some people who are enemies, hating each other and calling names and just picking on people. I have a cousin that lives close to us but they're different. They say they are hating on us. I don't know why and they kinda do stuff like when they're drunk and stuff they say things and try and fight us and stuff like that. It's kinda like people have a lot of problems in this community but no one says anything about it because – I'm not sure. It's like – I don't know, it is not like it used to be – people are hating each other. (R. 16)

This uncertainty regarding the reasons for the changes in their lives was echoed throughout the narratives and they searched for a way to explain the complexity of what they were experiencing.

Loss of Elders

The young people, for example, said that things are different now because a lot of the older Elders have passed away and fewer people have knowledge about how things used to be. One of the participants described the loss with the following passage:

> We lost a lot of Elders. They used to come with nice stories, sitting by the fire. When it just got dark they would have these stories that they would like to tell. There is not that much people that still have stories of back in the days – the wagon days. (R. 17)

The older Elders "came out with us to the bush and talked to kids about what it was like and how they survived, now-a-days they don't really do that. . ." (R. 13). Now many of the younger Elders have jobs, there are fewer older Elders and more young people, and that has changed things too as this young person said: 'There is hardly any Elders. Those people that drum and stuff like that, there is hardly any of them around. There are just a few Elders around and there is mostly teenagers – lots of teenagers" (R. 10). The participants commented that now people treat Elders differently: "people back then used to show a lot of respect for Elders but now-a-days it's not like that" (R. 4).

People Don't Go Hunting As Much As They Used To

The young adults said that people do not hunt as much as they used to anymore and several participants thought it was because their, "generation has gotten lazier" (R. 15). Some of the young people, however, felt that there were

other reasons contributing to fewer people hunting, fishing, and camping. For example, now people have to go further to hunt and camp, and transportation is a real problem because, "a lot of people don't have vehicles here" (R. 18). One young man explained how hunting and fishing were still an important part of his life, and, how having a vehicle allows him to continue to practice his tradition:

> People don't go hunting anymore like they used to. There are sometimes they do – but now – it's just not important anymore for them or they have no ride to go camping. I don't ask them - I go whenever I want. I go hunting for my grandparents. I bring food home for them. Every fish I catch, or every duck, or a moose I just bring back them some. One leg or one duck or half the ducks I give it to them. Half the fish I give to them – just provide for my family if they want some. It's my role to be a provider for my family or they would have to eat store-bought. (R. 5)

Another participant talked about losing his skills because he has no license, no vehicle, and no one to take him out hunting and trapping. He explained that:

> We used to go out hunting a lot. Some of the Elders come around here saying we need food, we need someone to hunt for us. We used to do that a lot too, now we can't because there is no one taking us out . . . I like butchering the moose, doing the hide, fishing. It's really fun. I got used to it but now I don't really remember what to do because they stopped doing that [taking us out] about 4 to 5 years ago. (R. 13)

Other young people said that they would like to go out hunting and fishing more but they admitted that it is hard to find people to go with, as this young man commented:

> Sometimes I go hunting and fishing but not as much as I used to. It is hard because not many people are interested in it to go with. There are actually people who do stuff like hunting but some people they don't because of drinking and stuff. There are some people who do but I don't know them. I

> do have uncles and cousins who do sometimes go hunting and fishing and duck hunting and I do go with them. (R. 16)

One young woman said that her dad used to take her out hunting, but now that he is working he does not have the time to take her, and both her parents feel that going alone would be too dangerous for her. She said that, "even with friends they still won't let us go. We're old enough but they still wouldn't let us just go out there because there are bears, buffalos, and wolves out there" (R. 9). For another participant, going out on the land just brings back too many memories: "It's not good. Every time I go out I remember my grandpa. Too much memories – sometimes I miss my grandpa" (R. 14).

Loss of Social Unity

All of the young adults who participated in this research spoke of missing the social activities and the friendships that they had as children. The recreational and social opportunities and meeting places that were an important part of their life in Chateh are gone now. One participant spoke of the changes in the following passage:

> Everything has gone crappy, everything has gone to shit. First of all there used to be a store around here . . . but then it went out of business. Then there used to be a youth centre which was going good and then everything went downhill there too. And at the arena a lot of kids used to go skating then that went downhill there too and at the baseball court a lot of kids used to play baseball and now they are not really into it. (R. 9)

One participant said that "it's boring now because we've got nowhere to hang out" (R. 19) and the loss of recreational activities is changing community life because

"there is nothing for the kids to do here . . . and they get into trouble because there is nothing much for them to do" (R. 2). Community life is different now because of the reduced variety of activities for the young people to enjoy on the reserve and "It was pretty good but now everything changed. I don't like it around here now because it is mostly people fighting and arguing with each other" (R. 6). Another young person explained his sense of loss with this passage:

> When I was around 12 years old it was fun. There was a youth centre – a place for kids to hang around – to have fun. There was a place to play ball and people went changing and now it's pretty boring. People don't go around each other because some of them are mostly being bad to each other over girls and things. It is not really good now. They don't really use the centre for kids and sometimes the arena is never open. The store - I don't know why - they closed it. (R. 13)

Many of the participants said that there are "a lot of young people starting to get into alcohol" (R. 1) and, as well, that many young people can access

> a lot of drugs . . . Older people if they need gas money will sell some of the drugs. It's for grocery money or whatever . . . they sell it to pay bills – their truck payments and stuff. They are working but it is not enough to pay their bills. (R. 8)

The young people noted that although alcohol is prohibited on the reserve, many people have lost their lives because of accidents, violence, and illnesses associated with alcohol consumption.

Alienation and Withdrawal

Many of the young adults said that because of the social and cultural changes in the community they are staying home. As this young man explains, "I don't go out much because I keep myself grounded . . . my parents ask us not to go anywhere because there is a lot of people hating us. So it's hard to make friends" (R. 16). Another young person said "I try to keep to myself. It makes me feel better when I don't interact with people" (R. 11). One participant explained, similarly,

> I don't actually go out. I only stay at home because every time I go out somebody blames something on me . . . Sometimes if I go out alone I get into a fight – people want to fight me that's why I don't go out – just stay at home. There is a lot of drunken people too. That's why I don't go out - not even at night. (R. 14)

The young adults spend their time "cleaning house" (R. 8) or, as this participant said, "I play games – video games. When I have nothing to do I just play games. Sometimes I just go towards town, buy DVDs – some new releases, sit at home and watch TV" (R. 7). Some spend their time tending their children, "playing with my younger siblings" (R. 9) or visiting family that is close by. Those that have jobs and vehicles talked about getting "out of the reserve" (R. 20), while those without jobs talked of "just going around trying to find jobs" (R. 6). One participant explained that:

> It is hard to find a job because it is a small community so people usually work out. Like with oil companies and construction. Winter is mostly when people get jobs. In Assumption it is kinda hard because I want to work but I

> couldn't because there's no jobs – you need a vehicle and summer jobs for students is all I could find. (R. 16)

Several of the participants, although in their early 20s, said that they have never had a job and that they have given up hoping to be employed while living on their reserve.

Thinking about the Future

Some of the young adults spend their time thinking about their life and their future as this young women explained "I just spend time by myself thinking of how I would like to see my future. I think a lot – I really think a lot. It is sometimes hard to sleep because I am still thinking" (R. 4). Like the 16 other young adults in this study who have less than elementary or high school education, she would like to take adult education classes in her community, get her high school diploma, and eventually get a job. Right now no literacy or adult up-grading programs are available in the community and the school here is only for children up to grade ten. If people want a high school education, or academic upgrading they have to move away or commute daily to High Level, which is an hour and 15 minutes away by car. Some people board-out with family, but "sometimes families are just not good to stay with because sometimes they struggle and stuff and sometimes they don't have extra room" (R. 16).

She thinks that she would like to someday be a teacher because, as she says, "I like little kids. I like spending time with them . . . Kids when they look up at you, they think that you know everything but they don't know that you don't" (R. 4). She would like to get her "education done – that way I could start helping people on the

reserve" (R. 4). Other young adults in this study said they would like to get their high school education in their community too and go on to be "a lawyer . . . or have my own business somewhere" (R. 10), "an actor . . . and teach acting and dance" (R. 16), "a hairdresser . . . or a paramedic" (R. 1). Another said he wanted to become a youth worker who helps the youth by "taking them on cultural days". As he said, "[I would] take them out in the bush, snare rabbits, and go hunting. I would love to help those kids – be a role model" (R. 8). Many of the young people also said that they want to continue learning from their grandparents and their Elders about the land, their past, and "just what my grandpa knows" (R. 7). They hope, as one participant said, that, "the Elders stay with us longer" (R. 10).

She also worries about the loss of services in the community especially the loss of health care. She said that, "They took the nurses from here and they are going to take them away from town and Rainbow but what about the Elders who get sick here – there is no help" (R. 4). Another young person explained that if a person is sick here "they gotta hitchhike or pay someone like $80 to get a ride. It is not good" (R. 18).

She hopes that things will get better here but she "tries not to pay attention" and when she "talks to [her] friends about what is going on here sometimes, they see the same things [she] sees" (R. 4) . Some of them are worried too, "[but] it is not really [her] purpose" (R. 4). Expressing similar concerns about the wellbeing of the community, another young person said:

> I honestly don't really pay attention. I don't know why I would bother paying attention to this land because everything is going broke – bankrupt - so that is why I never even pay attention and want to move out of this reserve and never look back and keep going on with my future. (R. 8)

Many of the young adults in this study felt that they too would like to see positive changes but as this young man said many people just want to get away from here "away from everyone and everything. If I were to get a house I would want to get away from it [Assumption] and away from people. I would like to live in a big open field. I want to feel at home" (R. 2). When asked where they would like to live if they could live anywhere in the world some of the young adults said they would like to live in Grande Prairie because they lived there when they "went to school" (R. 1), in "Peace River [because] they got a big river – you could raise a good family there" (R. 3) or "some place where there is lots of moose and some place quiet - ah peace and quiet" (R. 7), "even Paris or Rome, Italy or California . . . there are other places, it's a big world out there" (R. 9). As one young person explained:

> [Just] not here. No that is not what I want. There isn't a lot of anything here. I would not [choose to live here] because I know what this place is and I don't feel I fit in here because I have different opinions about different things and not a lot of people would agree with me and if I were to say something positive maybe they would probably look down on me because you rarely ever hear anything positive around here and that's just how I feel. (R. 20)

All of the young adults in this study said that they want to see an end to the alcohol and drug addictions in their community. One young man wishes that "all those people that are drinking right this hour would stop drinking" (R. 7). Another person thought that "maybe then Dene Tha' will get better if there is no booze" (R.

10). Many also talked about wanting to see an end to the violence, bullying, and feuding in the community, as this young person said: "[She wishes] for everyone to get along. Forgive and forget all the feuds that they have had in past" (R. 15). Another young adult talked about her hopes for the children with the following passage:

> I just hope it gets better for the young people and all the newborns. I hope they clean up this town so they can get a better life instead of a bad one. When I was growing up my life was good. I had a lot of friends. We were always surrounded by people. I hope they have the same. (R. 10)

The participants also talked about the need to restore recreational and cultural activities in the community. They talked about the need to "get a youth centre . . . and have a place for Elders so they can all listen to what they say"(R. 5), "have Tea Dances and pray for the well-being of the community" (R. 20), have a "place to hang out and get friends" (R. 14), and have "things that families can participate in and more things so that people can get involved in - not just live here. Have something for them to do, like get together" (R. 12).

Many of the young adults said that they would like to see the "respect for Elders, each other" (R. 13) and "the land" (R. 15) be regained and the community be rebuilt. One young person said he would "start by cutting all the grass and make the community look better" (R. 7). Another young man said that if he could he would:

> make a couple of parks where they could just hang out instead of walking around all night. So they could go camping whatever they want. I would build a youth centre; make houses for people that want houses instead of living with their parent after they're grown up. Make the community look welcoming for the people that come out here. First time coming here there will be parks wherever you go, garbage bins on every corner. Paving here instead of rough roads, sidewalks, just make the community look welcoming, look better. (R. 5)

Another talked about the improvements he would like to see happen in the future in the following passage:

> Fix up the reserve, paint the buildings again, get rid of the graffiti, all the spray paint around this place. Get back the adult ed. They had it here but they shut it down. Get back a youth centre . . . They used to have things here and they just faded away. (R. 18)

Although they would like life here to change for the better, many of the young people who took part in the research believe, as this young adult said that, "For something to get changed around here you have to wait for a long time" (R. 17).

Summary of Findings

When we consider the stories of these young people, and view them through the lens of sense of place, what becomes apparent is that the participants' place attachments have biological and cultural origins. Furthermore, their sense of place, belief systems, and adult preferences for specific landscapes were shaped by their childhood place experiences (Finding 1). Their memories of places and their attachments to them involved a combination of the physical setting and its features, the experiences that the environment afforded, and the social interactions that occurred in that place (Finding 2). Significantly, their cultural traditions

played a major role in shaping their experiences, memories, and senses of place (Finding 3).

The various settings in which place experiences occurred for the young people include a combination of their childhood homes, their kinship areas within the community, the built environments of the community, the larger ancestral region outside the reserve, and for some, the communities where they visited or attended school (Finding 3). These places made up the participants' socio-physical world and they have memories of and attachments to each of these places (Finding 4). Furthermore, the young people in this study have developed deep attachments to their place because it is their home and the homeland of their people (Finding 5); however, something is happening here and it is changing the way the young people feel about life in their place (Finding 6).

The place they knew as children has changed both in its attributes and in its functioning. It no longer provides the livelihood and opportunities for experiences that it once did for the young people and as a result it is losing its meaning to them (Finding 7). Their place also appears to be losing its permanency and its predictability (Finding 8). Furthermore, all the young people in this study talked about experiencing a loss of culture and changes in their way of life (Finding 9). There are increasing signs of community distress, their kinship networks are breaking down, and people's relationships with one another are deteriorating (Finding 10). Their place appears to have been altered in such a way that it no longer resembles the place they knew as children and many sense that they no longer belong here because "It's changed a lot" (R. 18) (Finding 11).

Conclusion

The following chapter will analyze each one of these findings individually and connect them with the literature on place attachment and disruptions in place attachment. It will also blend these findings with the historical background of the Dene Tha' people and industrialization in the region. Furthermore, it will draw on information from other related research studies.

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter contains the analysis and synthesis of the findings presented in chapter 5 and is organized using the place disruption framework first proposed by Brown and Perkins (1992). It includes the following sections: pre-disruption phase; nature of the disruption; transformation of people, place, and processes; and finally, thoughts about the future. The analysis incorporates historical context (chapter 2) and draws on sense of place, place attachment, and disruptions in place attachment theory (chapter 4). It also compares and combines the findings of other related research studies.

The study uses qualitative research techniques to examine and describe the environmental, social, and cultural changes that are occurring from the perspective of 20 young adults who live in Chateh, on the Hay Lake #209 reserve in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta. The original taped interviews were replayed a total of six times during the initial analysis process to summarize case by case responses, to confirm similarities and differences in the interviews, and to gain overall impressions. The data was coded and re-coded to identify the major and minor themes and to highlight unusual or atypical insights. The interview responses were then grouped by themes under their respective interview questions and presented in a plain language summary format to the participants and the community for confirmation and discussion (Appendix C). Finally, the data was analyzed through the lens of *sense of place* using Brown and Perkins' (1992) conceptual framework on disruptions in place attachment detailed in Chapter 3.

The research questions in this study are threefold:

1. How did the young adults develop their sense of place and what does their place mean to them? (Pre-disruption phase)

2. What transformations in people, place, and processes are they experiencing? (Disruption phase)

3. How are these transformations changing the way the young adults understand and experience their place and their future? (Post-disruption phase)

These questions were largely answered by the results presented in chapter 5. Overall, the major finding is that the young adults who participated in this study developed deep attachments to their place and a sense of belonging there; however, environmental, social, and cultural changes have altered life here and as a consequence many of the young people no longer want to remain living in their community. The results of this study suggest that the Dene Tha' people are being gradually displaced by industrial activity and that their homeland is becoming unable to sustain them or their culture.

Pre-disruption Phase: Development of Place Attachments

Finding 1: Place attachments have biological and cultural origins. The participants' sense of place, belief systems, and adult preferences for specific landscapes were also shaped by their childhood place experiences.

This finding supports Riley's (1992) argument that although there are three schools of thought (biological, cultural, and personal experiences) regarding the origins of place attachments, a comprehensive understanding of why people become attached to places involves a combination of all three possible explanations. The participants in this study are descendants of Aboriginal people

who have lived as hunters and gatherers in what is now known as northern Alberta for over 10,000 years (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Ray, 2002). The boreal forest met their ancestors' biological need for food, shelter, and safety and as a people they developed attachments to this land because it provided these biological essentials and made their survival possible. It is this longstanding historical relationship with the land and its natural resources that forms the culture into which the participants in this study were born.

The Dene Tha' culture (way of life) evolved as Riley (1992) has suggested, as an adaptation to their landscape. As a culture the Dene Tha' developed adaptive strategies such as high mobility, family-based social structures, flexibility, adaptability, and respect for personal autonomy that enabled them to survive in a region that had widely dispersed and seasonally fluctuating populations of wild game. They depended on the knowledge of previous generations and on their memories of places and experiences. Moreover, their moral and spiritual development was closely linked to the land and the customs, traditions, values, and beliefs that had also been transferred from previous generations (Goulet, 1998).

In addition, the landscape and the opportunities to use their skills to earn a living that it offered, are integral to the Dene Tha' people as being representative of their culture. They consider themselves to be people of the forest who "have always been skilled hunters, trappers, and fishermen" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 50). They have developed attachments to this landscape as an expression of their collective identity as Riley (1992) and Low (1992) have suggested that

cultures do. Furthermore, the Dene Tha' were nomadic and semi-nomadic and travelled great distances in search of food. As a result, their collective sense of place includes all of the land within their traditional territory. The Dene Tha' people have strong attachments to or affective bonds with this land because, as Tuan (1977) has argued, it is their homeland and has supported their livelihood for thousands of years. For example, in The Dene Tha' Nations' (1997) *Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study,* their traditional way of life is described by the following:

> They traveled to every corner of their traditional territory in a constant search for food. Dene Tha' babies were born in winter camps and on summer trails. People were buried wherever they traveled. Every corner of the traditional territory was important to their way of life. Every animal was vital to their survival, as was the animal's habitat. (p. 18)

Although the Dene Tha' people settled on reserves in the mid 1950's and early 1960's following the signing of Treaty 8, they continued to practice their cultural traditions and to rely (at least partially) on wild game as a dietary staple (Bouchard, 2006; Goulet, 1998).

Today Dene Tha' children are considered registered Indians and they have inherited constitutionally protected life-long treaty rights to live on the reserve and to hunt, trap, fish, and gather herbs, medicines, and other material throughout their traditional territory. The land and their history of being hunters and gatherers are part of their heritage and their identity. As Biery-Hamilton (2001) acknowledges, how people use their environment is linked to their core values and beliefs and therefore, the young adults in this study have also inherited the

foundations of people-place relationships and values and beliefs that have evolved over centuries of living with and on the land.

Cultures and places change over time (Csonka & Schweitzer, 2004), however, and are influenced by the actions of others (Eyles, 1989). Consequently, the young adults in this study grew up in a time and a place unlike any of the generations before them. The participants are the first generation of Dene Tha' people to grow up in Chateh with their families. Many of their parents had lived in the residential school here but this generation of young people, by contrast, had actually lived at home and attended a regular day school in their community. Unlike previous generations, they have a hometown but they also have had opportunities to experience the natural environment based on their cultural upbringing (Goulet, 1998).

When the participants in this study were children the natural environment, although already altered by industrial development, still afforded them opportunities to personally experience what it was like to hunt for moose, to camp out on the land, and to fish in rivers and lakes like their grandparents and countless generations before them had. Even though the young adults did not live in the forest or grow up there, they were taken to hunting, camping, trapping, and fishing spots that had been used by their families for many years. Their stories of growing up in Chateh are a collection of memories about taking part in outdoor activities, observing and learning about their environment, and participating in routine food gathering and preparation activities with family and friends.

These early environmental experiences were a major part of the young peoples' childhood development, and as Piaget (1954), Riley (1992), and Sebba (1991) suggest, childhood experiences strongly influence place attachments. Furthermore, as Edward Tolman (1948) has argued childhood experiences shape people's view of the world and belief systems and there is a constant thread throughout the transcripts that indicate that the participants' early experiences in the natural environment have indeed influenced their beliefs, perceptions, and values. They use their childhood place experiences as benchmarks and reference points to gauge and describe environmental change (Kitchin, 1994; Riley, 1992; Tolman, 1948). For example, phrases such as, "It was good during my days." (R. 18); "There was a lot of things to do back then . . . " (R. 10); and "Like back when I was younger things were different . . . " (R. 1), were commonly employed throughout the interviews to convey both the passage of time and their sense of the changes that have been occurring in their community and their environment.

Their early environmental experiences appear to have also strongly influenced their preferences for landscapes (where they feel at home) now that they are adults, as this young person said: "I want to live in a big open field. I want to feel at home" (R. 2). This finding supports Kitchin (1994), Marcus (1992), and Riley's (1992) arguments that peoples' patterns of affection (or rejection) for landscapes, settings, and places are based on childhood experiences, and that these patterns remain throughout a person's life. Kaplan and Kaplan (1982) have further argued that people's landscape preferences are an indication of what they find "healthy and supportive" (p. ix), and that humans prefer

locations that make sense to them, in which they can be effective and meet their own needs. For the young adults in this study who grew up in a hunter-gatherer society, it appears that they find the natural environment healthy and supportive. As one young person said, being on the land gives her "peace of mind. It relaxes me and makes me think more about my life" (R. 4).

Finding 2: Environment, Experiences, and Social Relationships

The participants' memories of places and their attachments to them involve a combination of the physical setting and its features, the experiences the environment afforded, and the social interactions that occurred in that place.

This finding is consistent with Brandenburg and Carroll's (1995) definition which states that sense of place is a holistic construct comprised of the physical setting, the human activities that occur there, and human social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) rooted in that setting. Although there is debate in the literature regarding whether the environment, the experiences, or the social relationships has the greatest influence on the development of person's sense of place, the findings of this study suggest that all three components are interrelated and function together in the formation and the maintenance of place attachments.

The physical setting appears to have provided the participants in this study with opportunities to be actively involved and engaged with the natural environment in their childhood. The findings of this study are collaborated by Sebba (1991) who argues that the quality of the natural environment and the intensity of early sensory experiences become etched in memory. Furthermore,

Relph (2007) suggests that sense of place involves sensitivity to the distinctive qualities of a place that is both instinctive and learned through careful observation of the differences between places. Likewise, observing and environmental learning appear to be fundamental to the young people in this study and each place is memorable to them because each place provided opportunities to learn and to have direct personal experiences. Places were remembered as locations where they camped, cooked ducks, fished, hunted moose, picked berries, herbs, and medicines, and trapped, and these activities are all intensely rich sensory experiences. Evidence throughout the transcripts also reveals that Elders and family members deliberately taught the young people to become aware of different environments, and to develop the skills that would enable them to make sense of places and to be effective in them.

Stedman (2003) suggests that the actual characteristics of the environment influences a person's sense of place by acting as a "basis of meanings, which in turn affect[s] attachment and satisfaction" (p. 682), and the findings of this study also support that idea. Without the features of the natural environment the young adults would not have had the place experiences that formed their memories, meanings, and place attachments. Likewise, without the social relationships that the participants associate with places, the memories, meanings, and place attachments that they developed would not have been possible.

To the participants, these important places appear to be symbols or repositories of environmental and social memories and meanings as well as symbols or markers for remembering, as Riley (1992) has argued, that places can

become. For example this young person spoke of going "[c]amping over there in Habay. Making fire at a tee pee and eating outside and walking around and all that when I was small" (R. 19). As is suggested in the literature, the places that the young adults talked about were all places that afforded shared experiences with family and friends, and places had meaning for them because of these shared experiences (Altman & Low, 1992; Eisenhauer et al., 2000; Hufford, 1992; Marcus 1992; Riley, 1992). Places afforded opportunities for experiences that involved social bonding, as this quote demonstrates: "We went out hunting, camping, fishing, and all the outdoor activities with my two brothers, my mom and my dad and me" (R. 9). These shared experiences also influenced the young adults' expectations of future place experiences:

> I went hunting with my friend's family in Morsely and we got 11 moose. We are going back there in September and are staying over for two weeks. It was really fun when we stayed over there – it was really great. Me and my friend's family went hunting, snaring, and swimming. Me and my friend have agreed to go back there this fall. It's been two years – we went every year for three years. We did dry meat, gave some to the Elders, we shared the meat. We did moose hide and made drums with it. (R. 13)

This passage also highlights that success in traditional hunting and trapping activities on the land also enabled the young people to fulfill an economic and social role in that the meat was shared with others. This sharing maintains social relationships with people beyond those present during the actual experience, and therefore, contributes to a collective sense of success and place while providing identity validation for the hunters and the community as a whole. In addition, the place experience affords people with the raw material (moose hide) to produce

culturally meaningful artifacts (drums) and symbols of the place and the experiences that occurred there that can also be shared later with others.

As Altman and Low (1992) have noted, places themselves can be symbols that represent social experiences and relationships, and Riley (1992) points out, that memories of places can bring back the deep emotions connected to the social relationships that were experienced there. This emotional association with place and people is evident in passages such as the following:

> I don't know how to say this but the things I said before [hunting, fishing, camping] I just love doing it. Sometimes we go hunting towards Manning too. Going out sometimes with the school, sometimes with cousins, sometimes with aunties too. It's a family thing – I just had such fun out there with friends. (R. 7)

To the young adults who took part in this research place meanings consist of bundled memories of the natural environment, the experiences that they had there, and the people who shared the experiences with them.

This finding affirms the research of Eisenhauer et al. (2000) regarding the relationship between social interactions and place attachments. In their study of the use of public land, people considered places special most often because of interactions that occurred there with family and friends, and the memories associated with these people at these locations. Social ties and relationships do appear to have a profound influence on the meanings people attach to places and for the young people in this study. Social relationships were a key factor in their place memories and their attachments to places.

Eisenhauer et al. (2000) also noted that their research identified social/cultural differences in the activities that people from different communities engaged in and suggested that the meanings people attach to places may vary according to the experiences they seek. Conversely, although the young adults who participated in this study do use their environment to obtain food, the social relationships and memories of people associated with places appear to be most salient to them regardless of the activity they engage in. The experience of acquiring food appears to be inter-connected in their place memories with the family and friends that were a part of the experience as well as those who they later shared the food and the stories of the experience with. The young adults also camped, swam, canoed, walked, and viewed wildlife - activities that were not directly related to acquiring food, which suggests that the participants seek and use many features of their environment for a variety of different types of experiences. Social relationships, however, appear to be of primary importance in the young adults' recollections. This emphasis on social relationships may be in part due to the fact that their traditional territory is the boreal forest region and the Dene Tha' people co-exist here with bears, cougars, wolves, and other animals of the forest; consequently, kinship and friendship relationships are extremely important for knowledge transfer, protection, and companionship. This may help to explain why social ties and relationships are so much a part of the young adults place attachments but their attachments and how they perceive their environment have also been strongly influenced by their cultural upbringing.

Finding 3: Role of Culture

Culture played a major role in shaping the experiences, memories, and place attachments of the young adults in this study.

This study supports the literature which states that culture plays a major role in the formation and maintenance of place attachments (Agnew & Duncan, 1989, Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Erickson, 1976; Low, 1992; Riley, 1992; Rotenberg, 1993; Shamai, 1991). The Dene Tha' culture is an adaptation to this particular environment (Riley, 1992), and as Erickson (1976) has recognized culture is the means by which a group socially reproduces itself. Since the Dene Tha's ancestral relationship with the land in the north dates back more than 10,000 years (Berry & Brink, 2004; McMillan & Yellowhorn, 2004; Ray, 2002), their culture, therefore, has more than 10,000 years' worth of accumulated experiences, memories, meanings, and attachments associated with the boreal forest region.

The Dene Tha' people in Chateh are geographically isolated and separated by distance from both non-Aboriginal communities and other Dene Tha' settlements. The community of Chateh is also on a reserve where almost all of the residents are Dene Tha' people. Although the community was established when the residential school opened here in 1951 (Goulet, 1998), the vast traditional territory that surrounds the reserve and stretches across the northwest section of Alberta, the northeast portions of British Columbia, and southern portions of the Northwest Territories (Bouchard, 2006; The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997) still symbolizes the Dene Tha' culture and the identity of the Dene Tha' people because it is their ancestral homeland (Tuan, 1977). This is particularly true for

the older generations who actually lived throughout their territory, and who have passed on their memories and meanings associated with the land and their way of life to their children and grandchildren through their oral stories and teachings.

Members of the older generation were the first people to settle in the new community of Chateh (then known as Assumption) when it was first established and they did play a significant role in setting the cultural tone of the community and creating new ways of living that were necessary when the people were no longer nomadic, and the different kinship units began residing together in a permanent location. The signing of Treaty 8 had, like in other First Nation communities in the north, brought Dene Tha' people under the control of the Indian Act. Consequently, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, missionaries, and government (provincial and federal) natural resource, economic, and social policies also strongly influenced the culture and the day-to-day life in the community as they did in other Aboriginal settlements (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000). The Elders and the grandparents of the participants in this study, however, maintained on-going social and cultural practices that Champagne (2007) suggests, are essential for social and cultural continuity across time. This continuity provided some of the stability, predictability, and collective identity that is associated with people and their place, although the environment and the lived reality were already undergoing dramatic change.

This study demonstrates that the Elders and grandparents in the community were and remain an important connection to the land, the past, and the shared roots of the Dene Tha' people including the young people who participated

in this research. By maintaining their Dene Tha' traditions such as Feeding the Fire and Tea Dances, they provided the symbolic linkages with the land that Low (1992) has identified as being fundamental to the cultural processes of place attachment. The Elders and grandparents connected the young people with centuries of place meanings and values through their stories, their language, and their behaviour. Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) noted that places are culturally embedded when memories are transferred to individuals and shared with social groups in this manner. Also, as Rotenberg (1993) has suggested, these types of shared memories allow cultures to develop collective place sentiments based on a collective sense of shared history and shared place experiences.

One of the places that symbolize this form of collective place sentiments is Habay. Dene Tha' people used to gather here during the summer months and eventually some people built homes and farms here before the residential school opened in Chateh and before Habay flooded and forced the community to relocate (Goulet, 1998). This place, therefore, has layers of meanings associated with it and layers of history. Habay not only remains a good place to hunt and fish but for the young people in this study it is also a place that allows them to connect with their history and to experience the landscape where their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents once lived in a more traditional way. Stories and direct personal experiences in these special places appear to have emotionally embedded the young people in their place and fostered a deep sense of cultural affiliation with previous generations and their traditional way of life. Many of the young adults said that they felt fortunate to have grandparents, who knew the

traditional ways and who knew the land through their lived experiences, as this participant said, "I guess my childhood was pretty good because I grew up with my grandparents and they are like really traditional – they grew up around these areas…" (R. 2).

Grandparents and Elders also provided what Low (1992) refers to as genealogical linkages by passing on familiar and historical knowledge, as this young man explained, "I liked to hang out at my grandpa's….We used to just go there and he'd talk about what happened a long time ago" (R. 19). As is their custom, the grandparents and Elders were responsible for inter-generational transmission of meanings, knowledge, values, and practices and they taught the young people traditional skills by including them in their routine activities such as preparing food, tanning hides, and making drums. In addition, they provided them with guided experiences in the forest as this young man remembers "Elders came out with us to the bush and talked to kids about what it was like long ago and how they survived" (R. 13). Ryden (1993) explains that people gain sensory knowledge of their environment through direct experiences with it and that memories and attachments develop out of these experiences. In the process, places are understood and become meaningful. The Elders and grandparents enabled the young people to have these direct experiences but they also helped them to develop their culturally specific ways of perceiving, knowing, and understanding their environment, as Tuan (1977) has observed that cultures do.

Members of the older generation were also important mentors and authority figures who provided moral guidance and passed on the beliefs and

values that had been part of their Elders' cultural upbringing. Through their oral stories and the performance of rituals and celebrations they maintained what Low (1992) describes as ideological linkages by teaching the youth about their language, their customs, their traditions, and their long-standing spiritual relationships with the land and the animals. The Elders' and the grandparents' cultural beliefs had, therefore, a major influence on the participants' sense of place, on their collective sense of identity, and on their sense of belonging, in and to, their place.

Finding 4: The Socio-physical World

The various settings in which place experiences occurred for the young people include a combination of their childhood home, their kinship area within the community, the built environment of the community, the larger ancestral region outside the reserve, and for some, the communities where they visited or attended school. These places made up the participants' socio-physical world and they have memories of and attachments to each of these places.

Piaget's (1954) *Cognitive Development Theory* explains how people begin to identify themselves with certain places as they grow up. He states that children acquire their attachments to people and places as they learn through their experiences and social relationships about their environment and the people in it. This learning is centered first in the home with close family and then expands to include more people and more places. Furthermore, Low (1992) has argued that peoples' place attachments develop within the context of their lived reality, and although individuals do have their own unique feelings and beliefs, these

emotions are embedded in the cultural milieu in which they live. This study affirms both of these theories.

The young adults' recollections of growing up in Chateh all contain memories about their homes and the cultural contexts they provided. They grew up surrounded by the Dene Tha' culture that was embedded in their routine day-to-day lives. Their homes were important to them because their families were there, and for most of the participants their home lives were centered on food preparation and other culturally related activities such as sewing and tanning hides with family and friends. Home, the traditional activities that took place there, and the social relationships that were centered there, appear to hold great significance for the young people in this study. These activities provided the stability and predictability that is associated with social and cultural continuity (Champagne, 2007). Their family homes were places that gave them a sense of protection, as this young woman said "My dad's house [is special] because I feel safe there" (R. 4).

Their kinship units that were grouped together in separate areas within the community also symbolized home to the participants. The young people had social networks within these kinship areas, and these areas represented the places within which each one of the participants and their extended families belonged within the community. They felt safe there, and as children their routine daily lives included freely visiting members of their extended families, and participating in the activities that were taking place in their homes. Some participants spoke of actually being raised by their grandparents while others

talked about spending their time visiting and learning culturally significant skills from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins within their kinship area. As one young adult explained, "There was a lot of freedom going to my grandma's house. Our grandma's was right across from our house" (R. 12).

The young people also developed social networks or connections through their experiences and social relationships in places where they attended school and participated in community based recreational, cultural, and social activities within Chateh. Their experiences in these places extended the young peoples' socio-physical world beyond their immediate families and their kinship units. These experiences added another layer of meanings and memories that strengthened and maintained their sense of bonding to Chateh as their home.

There were places too where cultural activities took place such as Feeding the Fire ceremonies, Tea Dances, and hand game tournaments. These shared experiences brought the different kinship units together and contributed to the development and maintenance of their culture (cultural continuity) and their social world (social continuity) while fostering a collective sense of place and a common bond within the community. They have shared memories of these experiences. Furthermore, places such as the arena and the youth centre provided the young people with somewhere to "hang out and make friends" (R. 14). These communal or public spaces Fitzpatrick & LaGory (2000) have described as essential components of a community's social infrastructure (social opportunities and meeting places). Humans are social beings, they argue, and the social dimensions of a community influences patterns of affiliation, levels of community

attachments, and ranges of social support. The social infrastructure within Chateh appears to have provided the young people in this study with opportunities for social interaction that they found supportive and meaningful, and offered them "fun things to do" (R. 8). This infrastructure allowed them to develop shared or collective memories with other members of their community. These activities contributed both routine and novelty, and as a result, added meaning and structure to the participants' everyday lives.

The young adults have childhood memories of playing sports, attending church, and learning how to skate. They also talked about having *places to go to* within the community such as: a grocery store; a nursing station; a day care; a youth center; an arena; a church; and of course a childhood school. For them, these places were a significant part of the social fabric in Chateh. These places and the memories embedded in them are, therefore, important symbols of their childhood, their identity, and their relationships with one another.

The young peoples' socio-physical world also extended beyond the community and the reserve and included places within their traditional territory that they visited with the school, the youth program, and their families and friends. Being out on the land with family and friends stood out in their recollections of childhood places, and they appear to cherish these experiences and these places because of the memories that they hold. Memories, as Riley (1992) has pointed out, are accumulated over time and when people acquire place memories they develop deep emotional bonds with places, as these places become a part of their life story. For the young people in this study the natural

environment and the land in their traditional territory hold this type of accumulated memories. Evidence also suggests that the young people valued opportunities to experience the land and the natural world and actively sought these out. As one young man recounts outings were very popular "If there was a trip people would say 'I want to go, I want to go' but there's no room [for everyone who wants to go]" (R. 13).

The young people went to places that provided opportunities to hunt, fish, and trap, but they also spoke of experiencing places that had special historical, family, and personal meanings to them, such as places that they associated with the memories of people that they cherished. Some of the participants talked about the times they stayed out on their grandpa's trap line and in family hunting cabins that were located in various sites throughout their territory. Others talked about the land as a place that represents the times they shared with family members who had passed away and their stories expressed a mix of sadness and a deep appreciation for the experiences that they had shared. To be able to experience these places again allows them to revisit these memories and maintain an emotional connection with the special people who were a part of their lives. Their traditional territory represents, therefore, a blend of the past and the present and the landscape and its storied history provides them with stability and continuity that they value, as this passage demonstrates "It means a lot to me because that is how my grandparents lived, and hunted, and trapped" (R. 11).

Finding 5: What Place Means To Them

The young people in this study have developed deep attachments to their place because it is their home and the homeland of their people.

In many ways the recollections of childhood places that were expressed by the young adults reflect the dimensions offered by Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) in their definition of sense of place. To these young adults, place indeed appears to be a holistic experience comprised of inter-related aspects of the physical setting, the human activities that occur there, and the social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) that are rooted in that setting. For example, one of young adults described the meanings she has for Chateh by saying "To me this is my hometown – this is my home. There is wildlife here; this is where I grew up. Here I have all my family members and all my friends here" (R. 9).

From the young adults' recollections of what it was like growing up here they offer insights into what place really means to them and its significance in their lives. This is their home and their homeland. This is where their lives are lived out on a day-to-day basis. This is where their family and friends are, where their memories are, and for some, their futures. To them place symbolizes their culture, their families, their kinship units, their community, and their identity as Dene Tha' people. It is their place in the world and they have a constitutionally protected right to be here.

Place for them is about wildlife, being active and learning, practicing their culture and traditions, and developing their social relationships. It is also about

their heritage, about their connection with their past and their ancestors, and about their natural environment. The place they remember from their childhood days provided them with food, experiences, safety, "a lot of freedom" (R. 12), and friendships. However, from their perspective, things are different now and, as this young person said "It was pretty good but now everything changed. I don't like it around here now…" (R. 6).

Nature of the Disruption

Finding 6: Something is Happening Here.

Something is happening here and it is changing the way the young people feel about their homeland and their hometown.

What is creating this change in the emotional bond that the young people had with their place? Is this change in the young peoples' connections to their community just a sign of the normal restlessness of youth? Several participants did acknowledge that they had grown up and now they see their place differently, as this young person explained:

> Everything got smaller. When I was small everything was fun. I was looking into a real big world. I just grew up and now everything is small. Like this band office was real big but walking around in it today it feels real small because I've grown up. (R. 17)

However, throughout all the interviews the young people consistently spoke of environmental changes and changes in their culture and the relationships that people had with one another. They spoke repeatedly about loss and what used to be and many expressed the belief, as this participant did, that "everything is

different now" (R. 3). Another young person described the changes that he saw happening by saying "I have outgrown this place because it has changed a lot and it is not the same as it used to be" (R. 16).

Is this loss of emotional bond with their place then an indication that the young people view their place differently because they are becoming assimilated into Canadian society, or because they are being influenced by modern technology and the promise of a better future in urban centers? Unlike in most communities, few families here have home computers, there is no internet café or access to newspapers, and although television service was available in Chateh since the 1970's, many of the participants said that they 'try not to watch TV" (R. 12) and most talked about wanting to hunt and fish more. Several of the young adults said that they were considering a return to the land, as this participant expressed: "I am thinking of going out there [in the bush] – living out there for awhile" (R. 5). Furthermore, almost all of the participants talked about wanting to take part in more cultural celebrations and spiritual ceremonies such as Tea Dances and Feeding the Fire. Why then do most of the participants also say that they want "to get out of this reserve" (R. 9)? Many Dene Tha' people believe that the increasing industrial development and the resulting environmental damage in their traditional territory are altering life here, and having a negative impact on the young people in their community (Steering Committee Minutes, July 17, 2007).

The industrial development of northern Alberta began with the fur trade and, as the natural resources of the region became known, more and more Euro-Canadians moved north. As a result of increasing demand for land and resources,

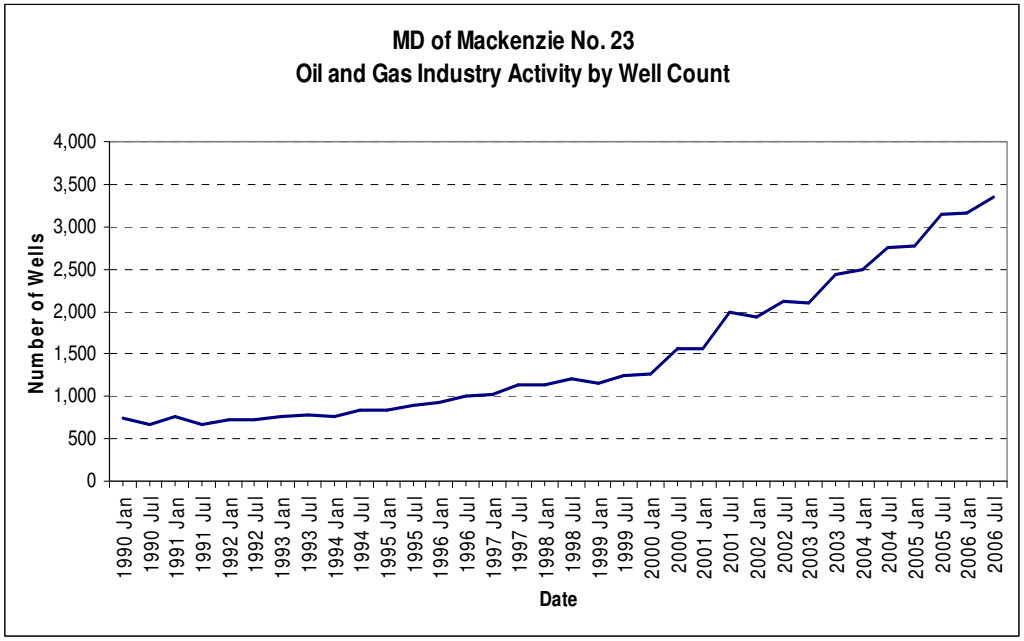
the Canadian government signed Treaty 8 with the different groups of First Nations people living across the north and allotted them Indian reserves. The Dene Tha' people were reluctant to adhere to the treaty because they wanted to continue their way of life and maintain their culture (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). They did not want to settle permanently on reserves, but as the fur trade declined and the economic conditions began to change, they started moving onto the reserves in the early 1950's. Elder Frank Yatchotay explains why people felt they had to move to the reserves by saying that "We didn't plan on coming to the reserves, but it's due to the children needing education, medicine and to learn and cope with the ever changing world. We had to move" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 19).

Although the Dene Tha' people have treaty rights to hunt, trap, and fish in their traditional territory, they have had no control over, or input into, land use or natural resource decisions. Control of the land and the natural resources along with revenues from the resources outside the reserve areas had already been given to the Province of Alberta with the signing of the Natural Resources Transfer Act (NRTA) in 1930 (Canada, 1930). Furthermore, the Alberta government took the position that issues concerning the First Nations people in the province were the sole responsibility of the federal government (Wetherell & Kmet, 2000). In addition, the province did not recognize the treaty rights of Aboriginal people on land outside the reserves or its responsibility to consult with First Nations people when policies or other proposed actions might infringe upon those rights. It was not until 2005 following a Supreme Court decision, that the province developed

policies and guidelines to include First Nations people in the consultation process (Alberta, 2005). However, neither federal nor provincial governments have examined the human and environmental consequences of the industrial activities that have already taken place in the Dene Tha' homeland.

The pattern of industrial development in northwestern Alberta, which is part of the Dene Tha' traditional territory, has been site-specific and incremental. Over the past several decades more and more land outside the reserves has been taken up by settlement, agriculture, forestry, and oil and gas activities. The boreal forest has, as a consequence, been increasingly fragmented and altered (Braun & Hanus, 2005; Ross, 2003; The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). For example, there were 738 oil and gas wells operating in 1990 in the region and by 2006 there were a total of 3,330 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Oil and Gas Activity in the Municipal District of Mackenzie



From "Oil and gas industry activity by well count: Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23," *p*rovided on request from www.nadc.gov.ab.ca on March 10, 2008.

It is estimated that each well site represents 2.47 hectares of land (not including seismic lines, pipelines, access roads, or processing facilities) (Braun & Hanus, 2005); therefore, the amount of habitat that has been altered by the operating well sites alone has increased from an estimated 1,823 hectares in 1990 to approximately 8,226 hectares by 2006.

Although, there is obviously increasing land use pressures in the region, approvals for industrial projects in Alberta are still reviewed on an individual basis. The impacts of the activities are seen as being site-specific; therefore, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) have not been required (Alberta Environment, 2009). The Alberta Environmental Assessment (and Exempt Activities) Regulation 111/93 states that, "the drilling, construction, operation or reclamation of an oil or gas well", and "the construction of a pipeline with a length in kilometers times diameter in millimeters resulting in an index number of less than 2690" (Alberta, 2008, n.p.) are exempt from EIAs. In addition, no system is in place in the region to evaluate or monitor long-term cumulative ecosystem changes or social and cultural impacts that may be affecting people, including the Dene Tha' who are living in the northwestern region.

The socio-economic indicators, which are often used to monitor the community level changes that can result from industrial activity, show little change in the past decade and a half. A review of the census data for the time period between 1986 and 2006 does not show any rapid increase in population in Chateh that can result from an influx of outside workers. (Statistic Canada, 1986; 1991; 1996; 2002; 2007). Chateh is on a reserve and residency is limited to Dene

Tha' people; therefore, population pressure does not appear to be a factor. The labour force participation rate has remained around 40 percent, and the 2006 data indicates that although 40.6 percent of the population in Chateh was involved in the wage economy, 23.2 percent were unemployed (Statistics Canada, 2007). The increased activity does not appear to have created increased employment opportunities for Dene Tha' people. The population of Chateh does not appear, therefore, to have moved away from reliance on the bush economy, temporary seasonal labour, and government transfer payments, despite the economic prosperity being experienced in the rest of the region.

Furthermore, income rates reveal that there has been little change in the personal economic conditions of people living in the community. Medium income for those 15 years of age and over was reported as $4,700 in 1991 (Statistics Canada, 1991) and only $8,880 in 2006 while provincially the medium income was $29,738 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007). According to the socio-economic indicators the escalating industrial development in the region does not appear to be having a positive economic impact on the Dene Tha' people living in Chateh. The economic conditions are similar to the conditions that were present when the participants were growing up and developing their sense of place. How then do we explain why many of the young people who have shared memories and deep personal meanings associated with this place are, as this young woman said "trying to get out of here" (R. 1)?

Disruption in Place Attachment Framework

Brown and Perkins (1992) argue that noticeable changes or transformation in place attachment result from noticeable changes or transformations in people, place, and processes and disruptions in place attachments can have profound impacts on individuals and whole communities. Disruptions in place attachment, they suggest, "interrupt the processes that bind people to their socio-physical environments" (p. 301), and can destroy the psychological, social, and cultural foundations that enable people to have meaning in their life. Without these supports people must find ways to cope with their losses, restructure their lives, and redefine their identities.

Insight into the impact of disruptions may be gained by examining the pre-existing conditions that influenced the development of attachments, the experiences of people living with the changes, and the post-disruption conditions that may influence recovery (Brown & Perkins, 1992). The earlier portion of this chapter explored how the young adults in this study developed attachments to their place and what their place means to them (Research Question #1). The next section examines their insights about change and addresses the second question in this research study, what transformations in people, place, and processes are the young adults experiencing? (Research Question #2)

Disruption Phase

The changes that the participants described have taken place within their lifetime (18 to 25 years), and some say these changes started occurring "about 10 to 15 years ago" (R. 3; R. 5; R. 15), which suggests that a threshold of change has been reached. Their accounts are based on their personal experiences, observations, and insights. Their stories about growing up in Chateh were all framed with phrases such as, "It is not like that anymore" (R. 13), indicating that there is a clear distinction in their minds between how things used to be and how they are now. The changes that they have noticed are outside their control and are occurring slowly without warning. Furthermore, they sense these changes as "not good changes" (R. 3) and there are repeated themes of loss, resignation, and helplessness throughout their narratives. These responses are all similar to the symptoms of trauma associated with disruptions in place attachment (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Erickson, 1976, 1994; Oliver-Smith, 1986).

Finding 7: Environmental Changes

The place they knew as children has changed both in its attributes and its functions. It no longer provides the livelihood and opportunities for experiences that it once did for the young people and as a result it is losing its meaning for them.

This finding is consistent with disruption in place attachment literature (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Erickson, 1976, 1994; Fried, 2000; Milligan, 2003; Oliver-Smith, 1986) which states that once people form affective bonds with

places changes to these places alter meanings and attachments. Also according to the literature on place attachment, the quality of the natural environment has an impact on the development and maintenance of place attachments (Brandenburg & Carroll 1995; Kitchin, 1992; Relph, 2007; Riley, 1992; Sebba, 1991; Stedman, 2003). Furthermore, deterioration of the environment is experienced as a loss of continuity because the destruction of the environment affects present and future opportunities for experiences (Erikson, 1976; Fried, 2000; Milligan, 2003).

Brown and Perkins (1992) argue that disruptions in place attachments can occur as a result of violations of personal space (burglaries and home invasions), voluntary relocations (moving away to attend school or work), and involuntary relocations due to climatic and natural events, war, and administrative/political decisions. Brown and Perkins (1992), Erickson (1976), (1994), and Oliver-Smith (1986) also suggest that disruptions in place attachment can occur as a result of the gradual deterioration of the environment due to increasing levels of industrial development. Milligan (2003) uses the term *displacement* to describe this effect and notes that, "displacement occurs when a site is no longer available for the expected uses because of destruction, modification, or access limitations" (p. 384). The findings of this study suggest that the Dene Tha' people, specifically the young adults in Chateh who participated in this study, are experiencing a disruption in their place attachments due to a gradual displacement that is caused by the increasing industrial development in their homeland.

Their place has changed and is continuing to change, as this participant noted: "It seems like the place is just changing a little bit at a time. Like there is

more stuff going on other than just watching" (R. 4). Although Dene Tha' people have still retained their life-long treaty rights to hunt, trap, and fish throughout the region, the environment is being increasingly altered by forestry, oil and gas production, and other forms of industrial activity and access to many of their important places is now prohibited or restricted. They are being, therefore, displaced incrementally from their homeland and many of the young people expressed the idea that their lives appear to be limited to the reserve. As this young person said, "It looks like people are living in this little part, just the reserve now" (R. 3).

The land they knew as children is increasingly becoming unfamiliar and unsafe to them. Some of the young people admitted that they are worried about dangers such as hydrogen sulphide gas (H2S). H2S is released in the processes of oil and gas drilling in the region and it is highly toxic and flammable (Burstynl et al., 2007). Most of the over 3,330 operating oil wells in their traditional territory and on their reserve are posted with signs warning of the presence of this gas.

In addition, the young adults are also worried about the contamination of the wildlife that is the foundation of their traditional livelihood. The wildlife is their food source and a critical symbol of their culture and their identity. It is also a critical aspect of their sense of place. The participants are witnessing changes in the animals, birds, fish, trees, and lakes and rivers that to them are signs that their homeland itself is "not that healthy" (R. 15) anymore. They are noticing deformities in the animals and fish that are a part of their diet, as the following quote reveals:

> Oil fish – I don't think they are too good. There is some kind of little sores on the fish now-a-days - deformed fish and stuff. They have an extra fin or an extra eye now. All the oil and gas around this reserve is messing up everything – the wildlife. (R. 10)

In addition, they are observing the loss of habitat that the animals depend on and the forest is changing around them in ways they find hard to understand, as this young person explained:

> Well there is a lot of forestry going on so there's lots of trees missing, more rigs and the weather has been really weird. The winters seem to be longer and there is a lot of flooding I have noticed – because of global warming. (R. 1)

Furthermore, the participants grew up being told by their Elders that, "If the moose and the animals disappear so will the Dene Tha'" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 57). They live with this belief, and now they are witnessing alterations in their environment and the resulting loss of biodiversity that represents a threat to their very survival. There are fewer animals and fewer different types of animals as this participant reported: "when I was younger I noticed a lot of animals but now-a-days you just don't see anything…"(R. 2).

Of particular concern is the loss of the moose which is the cornerstone of the Dene Tha' diet and way of life and a critical symbol of the Dene Tha' identity as this participant said, "We don't have moose around here. You see horses, buffalo, wolves, bears, that's all around here" (R. 5). The land outside the reserve has been highly fragmented by seismic lines, cut blocks, pipelines and roads which make the moose easy prey for predators such as wolves (Braun & Hanus,

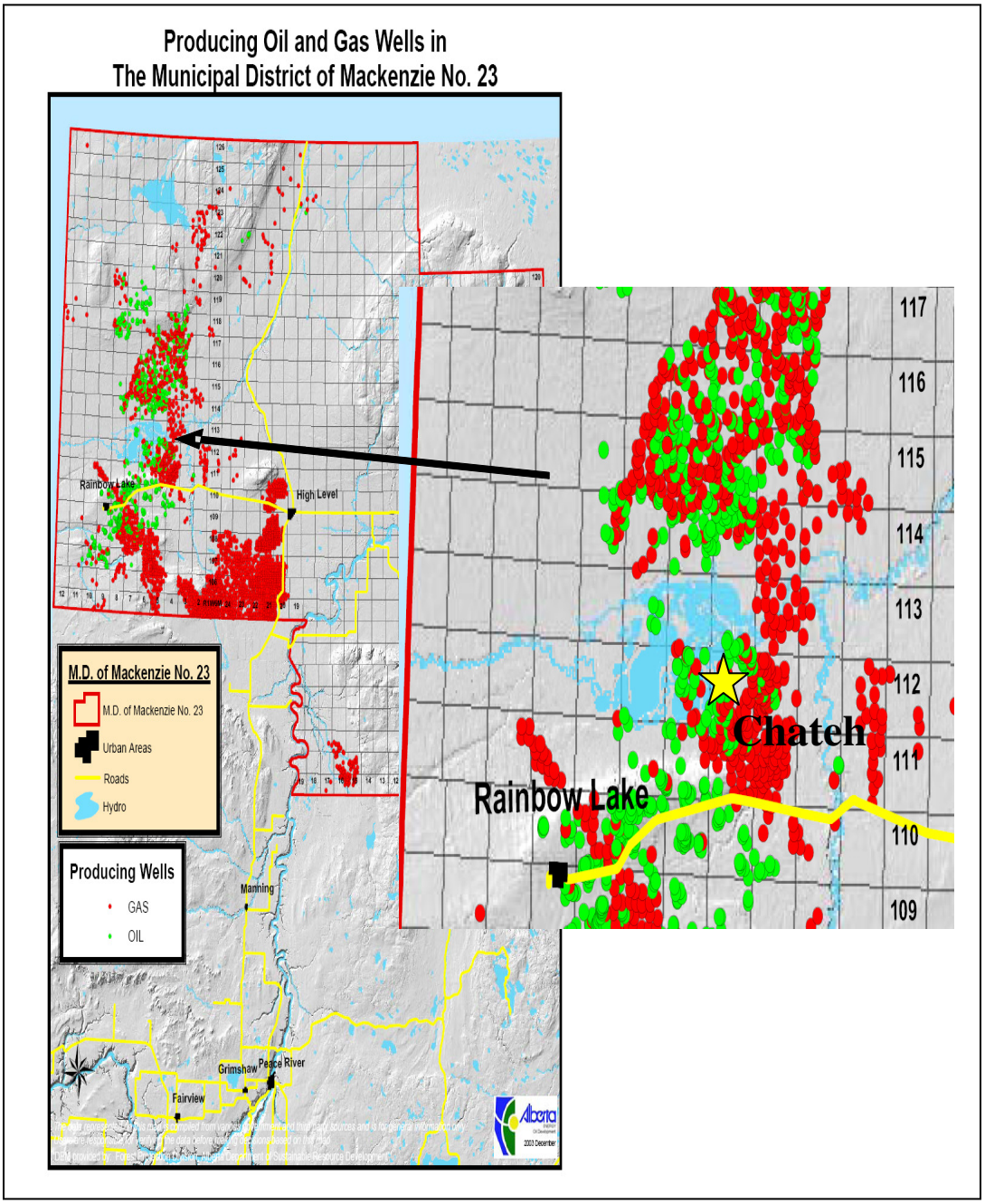
2005). Furthermore, wood bison (buffalo) were introduced into the region by provincial wildlife biologists. The Dene Tha' believe that moose avoid areas where the buffalo are and the Dene Tha' people do not hunt or eat buffalo because of their cultural beliefs (Appendix D). In addition, moose prefer shrubs and browse that grow in after a fire and because of the danger and the economic importance of the timber and oil in the region, the use of fire as a management tool has been banned by the Alberta government (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). As a result the forest is growing in and there are fewer areas that provide good moose habitat close to the community. Also, because people have been living permanently on the reserve since the early 1950's much of the wildlife in the area surrounding the reserve has been hunted out (Bouchard, 2006).

All of these factors have combined to reduce access and to create greater competition for the remaining game. Furthermore, the Dene Tha' people have to travel greater distances to hunt because of the industrial activity that surrounds their community and they have become highly dependant on the automobile. Ironically, the people who are continuing to practice their traditional lifestyle and do not have full-time wage employment, (which represents the majority of the population in Chateh) (Statistics Canada, 2007), are also the ones who do not have the funds to purchase and maintain a vehicle that is now required to hunt for subsistence.

Further complicating the situation is the frequent observation that many of the familiar hunting and camping sites have now been destroyed or altered by oil and gas installations and forestry activities and access too many of these places is

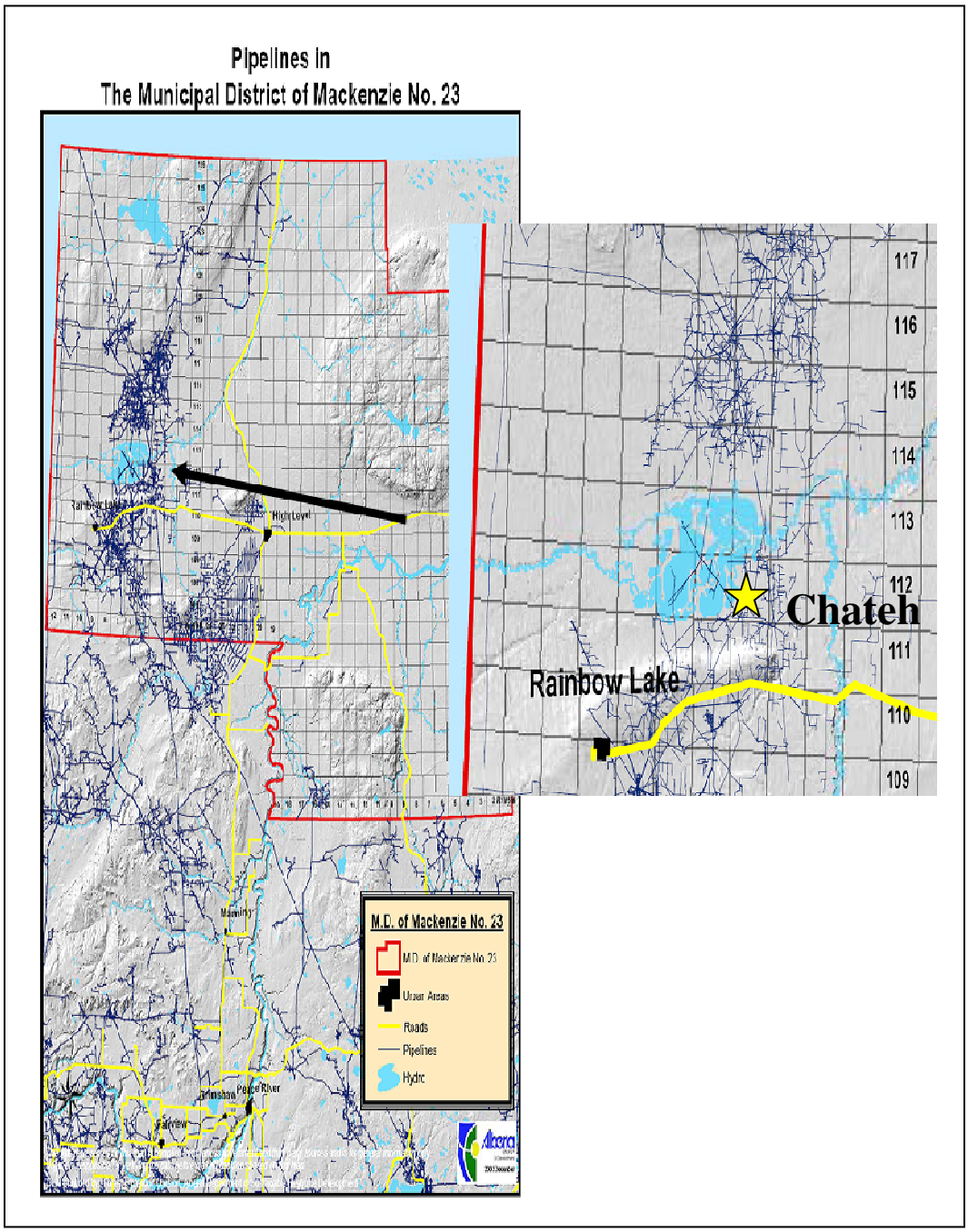
now prohibited because of the industrial activity. As this participant explained "they have a lot of pump jacks all over on lands where people used to go hunting, go moose hunting or fishing and stuff like that" (R. 20); another young person said that "[n]ow-a-days you go somewhere for a ride or something and you see oil plants then there is oil rigs and you can't. It is just gross" (R. 10). The following maps illustrate the magnitude and distribution of oil and gas sites (Figure 6) and pipelines (Figure 7) that were present in the region in 2003.

Figure 6: Producing Wells in the Municipal District of Mackenzie 2003



From "Oil and gas in the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23," Adapted from Northern Alberta Development Council, 2003, retrieved on May 1. 2009, from http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca/industry/Municipalities/ Oil-Gas/Oil%20and%20Gas%20in%20the%20MD%20of%20Mackenzie%20No%2023.pdf

Figure 7: Pipelines in the Municipal District of Mackenzie 2003



From "Oil and gas in the Municipal District of Mackenzie No. 23," Adapted from Northern Alberta Development Council, 2003, retrieved on May 1. 2009, from http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca /industry/Municipalities/ Oil-Gas/Oil%20and%20Gas%20in% 20the%20MD%20of%20Mackenzie%20No%2023.pdf

The participants also grew up believing that wild game was better for Dene Tha' people than store bought food (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997) but now some people are afraid that the animals, fish, and birds are contaminated. Many no longer trust their native food supply and are relying on store bought food that is lower in nutrition and more expensive. In addition, because there is only a small dry goods/convenience store in the community and no grocery store, people must travel to neighboring communities to purchase supplies. Those without transportation, therefore, have limited access both to wild game and to alternative store bought food. As a consequence, the Dene Tha' in Chateh are losing their ability to be self-reliant and independent as their homeland is becoming increasingly unable to provide them with their traditional livelihood or an alternative.

The loss of hunting, camping, and fishing spots also represents a loss of meanings and memories of social and cultural experiences involving family and friends that are a critical part of the young adults' emotional attachments to their place. As more land is taken up with industrial activities, more of these special places are being lost, as this young woman expressed:

> There is a place past Rainbow Lake where one of my uncles that I love so much . . . he has a cabin there and I remember when I was younger we always went camping there . . . but when I drive there now-a-days it is all broken down. It makes me so sad. It is not a place for us to be anymore – it's just not there anymore. (R. 2)

The participants in this study were taught to be observers when they were children and they grew up being told to have respect and concern for the land and the

animals because their survival was dependent upon the health of their natural environment (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). Now they are experiencing the increasing environmental impacts of escalating industrial development in the region that is threatening the very things that they value, that they believe in, and that they see as symbols of their culture and their identity as a people.

Finding 8: Loss of Permanency and Predictability

Place appears to be losing its permanency and its predictability for the participants in this study.

The more that the places that have meaning to the young people disappear, the more the landscape is becoming what Low (1992) describes as a symbol of loss. The deep emotional and psychological ties that Relph (1976) has argued, bind people to their place, are being severed one by one. In the process, their place is losing its permanency and predictability. Brown and Perkins (1992) explain that the continuity of place provides people with "predictability and order in knowing what to expect from their environment" (p. 280), and changes to place create uncertainty and an inability to make sense of, and be effective in, their environment. Furthermore, Riley's (1992) contention that place represents memories and meanings helps explain the deep impact that these changes have on the young people of Chateh. As their places disappear, the young people have a harder time holding on to their memories and meanings, and believing that expectations of future experiences will be realized. Milligan (2003) has argued convincingly that when a site is no longer available for expected uses, people experience displacement and it appears that the Dene Tha' people are

experiencing gradual displacement from their traditional territory which is an important part of their socio-physical world and their existence as a culture and as human beings.

Places with meanings and memories are not easily replaceable or exchangeable (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Each place has unique features and the young adults in this study have become sensitized to these distinctive qualities, as Relph (2007) argues, because they have been taught by their culture to observe and appreciate them. The participants know many of these places in intricate detail, as this quote reveals "There is a little thorn bush under a tree. I always pick up eagle feathers that have fallen from it. I found it by myself. We go there all the time. Me and our friends enjoy and just have fun (R. 17). The loss of places such as this and places that provide opportunities to continue their way of life appear to be creating what Brown and Perkins (1992) refer to as on-going stress for both individuals and the community as a whole.

The young adults in this study grew up knowing that "The Dene Tha' have always been skilled hunters, trappers, and fishermen" (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997, p. 50). Their way of life is an adaptation to their environment (Riley, 1992) and a reflection of their core values and beliefs (Biery-Hamilton, 2001). The changes in the environment resulting from the industrial activity appear to be threatening these core values and beliefs. Furthermore, as the Dene Tha' people become more and more displaced by increasing industrial activity their homeland is increasingly unable to sustain them or their culture.

Finding 9: Loss of Culture and Way of Life

All the young people in this study talked about experiencing a loss of culture and changes in their way of life.

As noted earlier, Brandenburg and Carroll (1995) define a sense of place as a holistic construct comprised of the physical setting, the human activities that occur there, and human social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) rooted in that setting. If we accept this definition, it is probable that altering the physical environment could result in changes in the human activities and social and psychological process that are involved in the formation and maintenance of place attachments. Furthermore, Brown and Perkins (1992) have argued that disruptions in place attachment, including the slow deterioration of the environment, can destroy the psychological, social, and cultural processes that are the foundation of place attachments. Similarly, Riley (1992) and Shamai (1991) have pointed out that the shared experiences, meanings, and collective memories of a culture are the basis for the development and maintenance of a sense of place. The increasing lack of access to the land, the deteriorating natural environment, and the possible contamination of their food source do appear to be altering the activities that the Dene Tha' people engage in, the continuity of their cultural practices, and the cultural, social, and psychological processes that have bonded the Dene Tha' people with their place for centuries.

All of the young people did talk about a noticeable loss of their culture and some used the phrase "fading away" (R. 5) to describe the slow erosion of cultural meanings and practices that they are experiencing. From their perspective some

people "aren't into it anymore" (R. 3). For some members of their community their traditional system of beliefs and values appear to be losing their relevance and "some people don't remember their culture" (R. 16). "There are some people that [still] do" (R. 16), however, which suggests that the cultural solidarity within the community is fracturing and that the symbolic linkages that once connected people together with their shared place (Low, 1992) are deteriorating.

Many of the young people talked about the loss of the traditions and ceremonies that they remember taking place when they were children. Now there are "hardly any Tea Dances and Feeding the Fire and stuff like that" (R. 10), and the Tea Dances "were a time for prayer" (R. 1) and a celebration of collective identity and history for the people here. These traditions and ceremonies, Low (1992) has argued, are important ideological linkages that are based on religious, moral, and mythological dimensions of place attachments. The loss of these commonly held traditions, rituals, and celebrations represents a loss of an important source of spiritual and moral guidance and a breakdown in the inter-generational transmission of meanings and beliefs. Low (1992) suggests that people, like these in Chateh, lose connections with their common history and each other when these meanings are lost.

The language that a culture uses to express meanings about people and places through traditions, ceremonies, and everyday routine activities can also be lost (Low, 1992). The young peoples' narratives indicate that people are indeed losing their ability to communicate between generations. One young person explained that you need to know how to listen, and he said that the younger

generations "don't really listen to Elders. I grew up with an Elder so I am used to Elders' speech. These kids here don't know how to listen" (R. 13). Another young person said that "My parents didn't teach us our language. I don't know why. But when I stayed at my grandparents they would always talk to us in Dene" (R. 11).

Many of the Elders and grandparents who provided the inter-generational transfer of knowledge about the land and Dene Tha' cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs are ageing now and many are passing away. Furthermore, "some of the younger Elders have jobs now" (R. 10) and do not have the time to spend on guiding the youth. Ironically, many of the parents of the participants in this study have limited knowledge about traditional ways because they spent their childhood days in residential schools in an attempt to adjust to the colonization and industrialization of the north (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). Therefore, they are unable to provide the same type of traditional knowledge to future generations as their parents and grandparents did.

When the participants in this study were children, their traditional way of life was embedded in their daily routine because of the cultural influence of their Elders and grandparents, many of whom had actually raised them. Now with the loss of many of their Elders, the destruction of their environment, and the limited access to familiar places, life here has changed. Fewer people are going hunting, camping, and fishing and these activities and associated activities such as tanning hides and drying moose meat and all the meanings attached to these experiences, are no longer a routine part of their day-to-day lives. Agnew and Duncan (1989) point out that it is the living or otherwise interacting with a place that gives place

meaning, and Biery-Hamilton, (2000) and Rotenberg (1993) argue similarly that the nature and quality of the lived environment influences cultural practices, everyday experiences, and the meanings of these experiences. For a few of the participants their lived reality now involves "working" (R. 20), but for many more their time is spent just "trying to find work" (R. 6), "playing video games" (R. 7), or "cleaning house" (R. 8). Many of the young people said they wanted to go hunting and fishing more but they lack the means to do so (R. 5; R. 18), the people to do it with (R. 13; R. 16), and familiar undisturbed places to do it in (R. 5; R. 10; R. 12; R. 14). This represents not only a loss of livelihood, but also a loss of the bonding and shared experiences and meanings that signify their culture, their identity, and the essence of their life in this place. It also represents a loss of opportunities to continue to acquire the knowledge and experience that is necessary to survive in the boreal forest, to understand their environment, and to be effective in it.

Finding 10: Loss of Their Socio-physical World

There are increasing signs of community-wide distress and there appears to be a fracturing of the kinship networks taking place as well as a deterioration in people's relationships with one another.

This finding is in agreement with the theories of Erickson (1994) and Brown and Perkins (1992) which have recognized that the deterioration or destruction of the environment can result in profound negative changes in peoples' social relationships and their ability to relate to one another in a meaningful way. Erickson (1994) used the term *trauma* to describe this effect, and explained that

trauma can result from acute events such as natural and man-made disasters, but it can also result from chronic conditions such as poverty and the slow progressive deterioration of the environment. Erickson (1994) also pointed out that individuals experience trauma personally but whole communities can also experience *collective trauma*. He explains that collective trauma is:

> a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma'. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared . . . 'I' continue to exist, though damaged and maybe even permanently changed. 'You' continue to exist, though distant and hard to relate to. But 'We' no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body . . . (p. 233)

The symptoms of trauma that Erickson (1994) identifies include "a numbness of spirit, a susceptibility to anxiety and rage and depression" (p. 21). People also show a heightened apprehension about their environment and their social relationships and may withdraw and "retreat into dependency" (p. 21) when they are overcome by trauma.

A similar view is offered by Brown and Perkins (1992), who argue that places and place attachments provide people with "anchors in life" (p. 280). Places and the artifacts that they contain both "reflect and shape people's understanding of who they are as individuals and as members of groups" (p. 280). Places, therefore, influence individual and communal identities and inter-personal relationships. When place attachment disruptions occur, individuals can lose their

meaning in life and their ability to relate to and connect with one another. The old attachments and previous social networks are not "literally replaced" (p. 280), nor are individual and community identities easily rebuilt after a disruption. Places and their meanings are also not easily transferrable or replaceable. When disruptions occur people may become immobilized and overwhelmed by the changes. In addition, the belief systems that individuals have developed may no longer apply and in the extreme, people may seek escape through alcohol and drugs, suicide, or other maladaptive behaviours.

All of the young people in this study did talk about increasing signs of community-wide distress. They spoke about escalating feuds and disagreements, divorce, marriage breakdowns, and widespread bullying. They also talked about increasing alcohol and drug addictions, suicides, and violence. Some thought that these symptoms started occurring about "10 to 15 years ago" (R. 5), and all of the young people commented that people were friendlier back when they were younger, as this passage indicates: "A long time ago…They would go hunting and camping. They helped each other out, smiled at each other" (R. 10). Now, as this participant said, "People get into fights a lot . . . I don't know just why – they get into fights and people drink a lot more" (R. 11). These feuds and fights are occurring between kinship units, within kinship units, and also within individual families, which indicates that the distress or trauma that Erickson (1994) has described, is pervasive throughout the community. The findings of this study suggest that the loss of opportunities to share the experience of hunting, fishing, and camping also represents a loss of opportunities for positive social experiences

and bonding, and this loss is having a profound impact on peoples' ability to relate to one another and to cope with the disruptions in their place attachments.

Along similar lines, Asch and Wishart (2004) connected the loss of Aboriginal people's traditional lifestyle with a breakdown in their social relationships. He explained that the sharing of meat in the bush economy united people; however, money in the wage economy is not shared in the same manner and as a result the loss of a common means to earn a living creates inequality in a once communal social system. The findings in this study appear to confirm this theory.

The deterioration of the natural environment, the possible contamination of their food source, and the loss of hunting and fishing places are also creating extreme poverty for the majority of the people in Chateh. Furthermore, those without jobs cannot afford the vehicles that they now need to hunt for subsistence. Since only 40.6 percent of Chateh's population reported participating in the wage economy in the 2006 census and of that group 23.1 percent were unemployed (Statistics Canada, 2007), the economic reality is that there is a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots and it appears to be contributing to the fracturing of the social and cultural fabric of this community.

Some of the young people did associate the changes in peoples' social relationships with the loss of their culture. Culture is not only a way of life but it is also a "way of living together" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 1). Furthermore, culture is a social relationship (Altman & Low, 1992) and the loss of cultural continuity

appears to be paired with a loss of social continuity, as this young person explains:

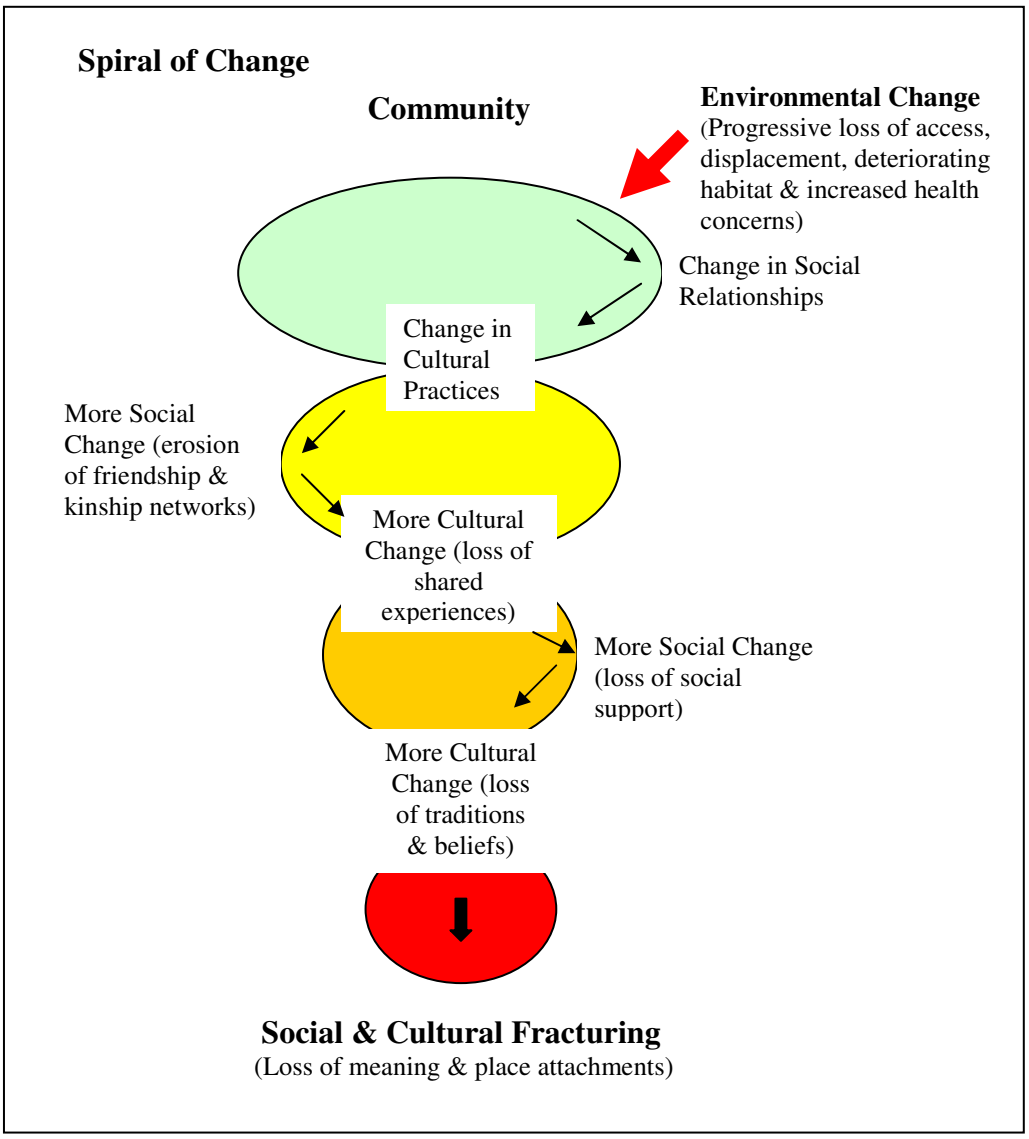
> Like back when I was younger, things were different- people were more into their culture and stuff like that and people were friendly back then but now it's different. Some people don't remember their culture and things are different because people aren't nice to other people. (R. 16)

Furthermore, many of the young adults spoke about how these changes in peoples' relationships are having an effect on their cultural practices, as this quote demonstrates:

> If there's a Tea Dance or something nobody shows up. Even the Elders that drum don't even show up and once they do they just give each other mean looks . . . Not like long time ago when they would just say hi and start talking. It is not like that anymore. It's changed. (R. 10)

The findings in this study appear to suggest that there is a negative compounding downward spiral occurring. The gradual destruction of their natural environment is resulting in gradual changes in the activities that people engage in (cultural practices) which in turn is altering their social relationships. The changes in the ways that people relate to one another are further limiting the continuation and maintenance of their cultural practices, which in turn is restricting the activities that people engage in (cultural practices), and altering both their social connections with one another and their overall sense of belonging in and to this place (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Model of the Relationship between Environmental Change and Social and Cultural Impacts



The social and cultural conditions within the community are also being impacted by the deterioration and loss of social infrastructure. Fitzpatrick and LaGory (2000) have argued that a community's social infrastructure and the social dimensions of a community influences patterns of affiliation, levels of community attachments, and ranges of social support. Also, as Rotenberg (1993) has suggested, shared experiences create the shared memories that allow cultures to

develop and maintain collective place sentiments and attachments. The findings of this study appear to indicate that these aspects of place are being lost in Chateh.

Although over 90 percent of the population in Chateh is baptized Catholic (Father Camille Piche, personal communication, August 23, 2007), the priest that lived in the community has retired and the church has decided not to replace him. Services are held only once a month now, or when there are funerals or weddings. Church-run social events that bring people together and create shared social memories are no longer taking place. The youth centre and the arena are closed and the sports and cultural activities that once took place there are no longer a part of the daily social life in the community. The grocery store and the restaurant are also gone, and all of the young people made statements such as, "We used to have things here and they just faded away" (R. 18), when they reflected on what used to be. In addition, there are fewer traditional or cultural events and ceremonies taking place and these events have personal and shared meanings for the young people in this study. Furthermore, the young adults are no longer attending school and they are not participating in the shared cultural events and outings that were such a critical part of their childhood days. Most of the young people also do not have employment and they do not have the social networks and social connections and routine that employment provides.

The socio-physical world of these young people appears to no longer to be providing them with the continuity, security, and stability that it once did. Their place, that once afforded opportunities for social experiences, appears to have been altered by the transformations in their physical environment and resulting

changes in their culture, their community, and their social relationships. From their accounts, their socio-physical world does not provide the social opportunities that would enable the young people to adjust or to hold on to their remaining connections with others, to rebuild their old relationships, or to develop new ones.

The deterioration of their socio-physical world, coupled with the loss of their traditional livelihood and their cultural practices, along with the increasing violence and the other community-wide symptoms of trauma and disruption appear to be causing the young people to become alienated and withdrawn. As many of the participants admit "It's not safe sometimes" (R. 4) to go out in the community and they keep themselves "grounded" (R. 16). The seriousness of this effect and the loneliness and isolation that it is creating can be seen in statements such as this: "I try to keep to myself. It makes me feel better when I don't interact with people" (R. 11). As another young person said "I sometimes wish the old days would come back again . . . I want the old days back" (R. 13) and he asks "Why did they change – it was fun long ago?" (R. 13).

Post-disruption Phase: Thoughts about the Future

Finding 11: Attempting to Re-build their Lives

Their place is losing its meaning to them and it appears to have been altered in such a way that it no longer resembles the place they knew as children and many sense that they no longer belong here because "It's changed a lot" (R. 18).

How do these environmental, cultural, and social changes affect the young people's view of their future in this place? (Research Question # 3). Oliver Smith (1986) wrote that people naturally grieve lost places to which they have deep attachments and the loss of their way of life in much the same manner that they grieve the loss of a loved one. This grief creates internal conflict between "allegiance to the past and commitment to the present" (p. 185) that must be reconciled before people can move on and rebuild their lives. Without the support of the familiar environmental, cultural, and social foundations people must find ways to cope with their losses and redefine their identities. That appears to be the challenge that the young people in this study are living with.

Their thoughts about their future appear to reflect the internal conflict that they are experiencing. On the one hand, many feel a responsibility and a desire to continue their way of life here, as expressed in statements such as, "This is where my grandpa lived and raised all my mothers. It's our turn. We have to carry on our tradition here" (R. 3). At the same time, many of the young people are questioning whether building a future here based on the ways of the past is really possible anymore, as this young person said, "I don't think there is [any going back].

Everything is changing a lot. I don't think they will ever go back to the olden days" (R. 10).

Although they developed deep attachments to their place as children, their childhood memories of experiences and the times they shared with family and friends are becoming just that, memories. They sense that expectations of similar experiences and relationships are increasingly becoming no longer possible here. As Milligan (2003) wrote, people become displaced "when a site is no longer available for the expected uses because of destruction, modification, or access limitations" (p. 384). From the young peoples' accounts it appears that they feel displaced from their homeland and their hometown as well because they sense that their place no longer provides opportunities for the social relationships that they value. Their place is losing its meaning to them as a result and it appears to have been altered in such a way that it no longer resembles the place they knew as children. Many participants sense that they no longer belong here because, "It's changed a lot" (R. 18).

They fear they are losing the traditional way of life that they knew as children and recognize that they lack the opportunity to develop an alternative or to find new meaning and purpose here. They talk about wanting to go back to school to finish their education in their community. But the reality is that, despite the promises made in the past, there are no literacy or adult education programs in Chateh. Since 1965, when their grandparents and their parents marched on the Alberta legislature asking for educational opportunities for their people ("We're People," 1965), they have been promised educational and vocational training

programs but these promises have not been kept even though 86 percent of people over 15 years of age have less than a high school education in Chateh (Statistics Canada, 2007). For a short time there was an adult education program but "they had it here and then shut it down" (R. 18). If the young people want an education they must leave and, as this young person said, "It's pretty hard because families are here – you don't want to leave but you have to finish school and all that – you have to" (R. 1).

The young people talk about wanting to have a permanent job in Chateh but the economic reality here is that there are few opportunities for employment within the community, since the majority of the people here are unemployed, and there are only a few positions available with the band. The promise made in 1965, of a federal-provincial economic development plan for the Dene Tha' people ("Official Promises," 1965) has not been kept. There is no manufacturing, retail, or service sector, no coffee shops, hair salons, garages, or restaurants here. There is no library, movie house, or community hall, and there are no volunteer organizations, clubs, or community service groups. Furthermore, many of the young people have less than a high school education; in fact, some have not even completed their elementary education and would not qualify for regular employment even at an entry level outside this community. The remoteness of the reserve, the poor road conditions, and the severe winter weather, further limit the possibility of being employed while living Chateh.

When asked if they could have a home of their own here most of the young people said that that was not possible. The promise of improved housing that was

made back in 1965 ("Official Promises," 1965) has not dramatically changed the poor housing conditions here and with the increase in the population in Chateh, many families remain living in deteriorating crowded living conditions. Some young people spoke of people that they knew who had been waiting for homes for so many years that " . . . people actually just give up asking for a house because they ask too many times and they don't get it" (R. 16). Many of the young people are also aware that without a job they could not afford to have a home even if one was available.

Although the young people in this study are between the ages of 18 and 25, when they were asked if they could date or find a life partner here, most of the participants said "no", because they are related to everyone here as this young person explained:

> I think basically everyone is related if they have both parents from here but I find if you only have one parent from here you are only related to certain families. It is hard to find a partner . . . I don't bother – I just stay home. (R. 15)

Chateh is an isolated community that is separated by distance from other Dene Tha' communities and from other non-Aboriginal communities as well. Furthermore, the different family groups from other areas no longer spend their summers together at fishing camps as they did in the past (Bouchard, 2006). This has meant that opportunities to meet and develop relationships with new people are no longer built into their cultural practices. Furthermore, few people come to

Chateh to visit, and residency on the reserve is restricted to Dene Tha' people, which has resulted in further isolation of the community and its young people.

Chateh as a hometown appears to be unable to provide the opportunity necessary for the young people to assume the role of an adult here, even though that is what they are now. Brown and Perkins (1992) argue that place attachments should provide people with a sense of control and ability to manage and respond to their environment as they move through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and their senior years and that people naturally expect their place to take on different dimensions and to provide different opportunities as they mature. For the young people in this study, however, that sense of control and ability to manage and respond to their changing environmental conditions and their changing maturity levels has been lost. The new opportunities that would challenge and accommodate them just do not exist here.

This lack of control over both their individual circumstances and the diminishing changes that are occurring around them are evident throughout their narratives. For example, when a participant described how the Elders used to tell the children stories, he said, "all of a sudden it just stopped. I don't know why" (R. 9). Another young person said that things were different in the 1990's, and she said that, "something happened. I don't know [why] –everybody just scattered" (R. 3). In describing the loss of community social infrastructure, a participant said, "Like we used to have a restaurant and things like that. I don't know what happened to it - it just went away" (R. 4) and another young person said "We used to have things here and they just faded away" (R. 18). As Brown and Perkins

(1992) have noted people often lack the ability to identify the source of the disruption, and the young people in this study do appear unable to pinpoint the reason for the changes that are occurring, but they do know that their socio-physical environment is increasingly unpredictable and unsatisfying and that their future here is increasingly uncertain.

Brown and Perkins (1992) made the hopeful suggestion that the slow deterioration of the environment may give people an opportunity to adjust and avoid the full impacts of disruption in place attachments, but the findings of this study appear to suggest that it may in fact heighten the impacts. Unlike disruptions caused by one-time events, such as natural or man-made disasters, this process is more prolonged, insidious, and pervasive. The slow deterioration of the environment does not have the suddenness associated with earthquakes or chemical spills, but it also does not have a definite beginning nor an end. Because slow progressive environmental damage does not have the characteristics of a crisis event it also does not trigger an outpouring of government or public concern. No emergency food supplies have been shipped here and no crisis intervention teams have been dispatched. The progressive nature of the disruption has meant, instead, that the symptoms of collective trauma that Erickson (1994) has argued result from chronic conditions such as poverty and the slow deterioration of the environment, have largely gone unnoticed. There has been no government, corporate, or media recognition of the value of the losses that the people of Chateh have experienced. Brown and Perkins (1992) have argued that without this admission, recovery is hindered and the victims are further

marginalized as they are forced to cope with their losses without assistance or acknowledgement.

The community itself has not experienced a rallying of collective behaviour that often occurs following a disaster as people work together to rebuild their lives (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Erickson, 1994; Oliver-Smith, 1986). One respondent noted: "There is a lot of confusion in the community [and] they are trying to get organized" (R. 4). There is little indication, however, that the people in Chateh have moved into a recovery or post-disruption phase because the deterioration of their environment and the slow erosion of their culture and social relationships are ongoing. Furthermore, a high degree of dissensus prevails and the people in Chateh appear to be immobilized by their loss and unable to work collectively together to restructure their lives.

The struggles that they face are seen as their personal troubles and personal failures and as this young person said "It's a secret" (R. 16). Some young people in this study thought that the loss of their culture and the reason why people were not hunting as much as they used to was because their generation was "lazy" (R. 9). Furthermore, even though the young people have no control over the conditions here, throughout their narratives there does appear to be a degree of shame and embarrassment for what is happening. When asked how they would describe Chateh to someone who had never been here before, many of the young people said that they try not to tell people that they are from here and as this young person explained "I wouldn't even say anything about it. I say I am from High Level. I don't tell them where I'm from. I am kinda embarrassed of the place" (R. 10).

Brown and Perkins (1992) have suggested that recovery from disruptions in place attachment is hindered when a community has few resources or alternatives, lacks a communal sense of shared experience, and

> communities often become "disabled" in the face of government, corporate, and media hegemony and widespread 'dissensus' [can occur] among victims regarding the nature, origins, and remedies for the disaster. Dissensus impedes community action . . . Dissensus is more likely when: predisaster community identity is weak or diffuse (e.g., with heterogeneity, geographic dispersion, absence of formal organizations) or [is] dependent on those responsible for the disaster, the disaster itself has socially and/or spatially isolated impacts; and postdisaster community organizations cannot agree on the nature of the disaster or become worn down by bureaucratic delays. (p. 299)

The findings of this study indicate that all these factors are contributing to the level of dissensus that is evident in the community.

When the Dene Tha', like other First Nations people, settled on reserves, the federal government determined the political system and required the separate kinship units to elect one Chief and a council. These leaders did not have decision-making authority or control over band resources, and federal Indian Agents sent from Ottawa determined the life on the reserves, allocated funds, and enforced government policies and laws. The Indian Agents were removed in 1969, but band affairs and the allocation of funds, housing, and services remains under the control of the Government of Canada, through the Indian and Northern Affairs Department (Berry & Brink, 2004). Land use decisions and the management of natural resources outside the reserves were and continue to be the responsibility of the Province of Alberta (Canada, 1930) and the Dene Tha' people have had little input into those decisions. The federal government continues to

have a fiduciary obligation to all Treaty Indians in Canada (Hurley, 2002), and as a consequence the Dene Tha' people are dependant on the federal government for funding, the allocation of services and programs, as well as their bands share of revenue from the Indian Oil and Gas and forestry development on reserve lands. Furthermore, because of a lack of employment opportunities, the Dene Tha' people are also dependant on the oil and gas and forestry companies for any seasonal labour jobs that might be available.

The incremental and dispersed pattern of industrial development in the region has damaged family hunting and trapping areas, and some areas have been more affected than others, although the overall health of the ecosystem has also been impacted. Since 2001, through an agreement called the *Schedule of Fees* (Ross, 2001), individuals people who hold trapping leases on lands outside the reserve are paid set amounts of money by the oil and gas and mineral companies. The amount of payment is determined by the nature of the development and the degree of ecosystem disturbance. This money is not compensation for the loss of livelihoods or cultural or social disruption but "rather payment for consultation and information sharing regarding the impact of the resource development activities" (Horvath et al., 2001, p. 28). There is no community-wide compensation or reconciliation for the loss of access, deterioration of the environment, or possible contamination of their food source for the many people who do not have formal trapping leases, but whose way of life is being nevertheless impacted by the development. Community interviews with Dene Tha' people, that were conducted by Horvath et al. (2001) suggest that the present

system is creating inequality and resentment within the Dene Tha' communities. This inequality may be contributing to the economic, cultural, and social fracturing that is occurring in Chateh and may be further hindering the Dene Tha' peoples' ability to take collective action to improve conditions within their community. Furthermore, the continued breakdown of what Mills (1959) refers to as the opportunity and social structures of their society and the high level of poverty and trauma within the community, also appears to be compounding the problem and preventing people from coping or working together to re-build their lives.

Evidence throughout the historical documents suggests that the Dene Tha' people have been trying for a long time to maintain their culture and adapt to the changing conditions in the north. Before they settled on reserves they insisted that they did not want to live permanently in one place because the wildlife is widely dispersed in the north, and in order to maintain their cultural practices and remain self-sufficient they needed to follow the seasonal patterns of the wildlife in the region (The Dene Tha' Nation, 1997). When wildlife became too depleted to sustain their hunting and trapping livelihoods they knew that their children needed education and an understanding of the English language in order to compete for jobs in the changing economic conditions. They asked for a boarding school for their children (Bouchard, 2006; Goulet, 1998). Although they did get a residential school, it did not allow the Dene Tha' people to thrive while living on the reserve.

When the conditions on the reserve became unbearable, the grandparents and parents of the participants in this study marched on the Alberta legislature and asked the province to intervene on their behalf because they felt that their federal

Indian Agent was not addressing the needs of their people. They wanted better housing and medical services, and improved educational and vocational programs, they wanted employment and they carried signs reading "We Want Work Not Welfare" ("We're People First," 1965). Some improvements were made to the housing conditions on the reserve but the promises of long term improvements in educational opportunities and an economic development plan for Dene Tha' communities have not been kept

The industrial development of the land outside the reserves has continued to escalate and in 1997 the Dene Tha' Elders and the community recorded their concerns about the impacts of industrial development that they were witnessing in their Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study (1997) but the impacts continue unaddressed. This series of historical events, the promises that have not been kept in the past, and the slow bureaucratic process may indeed be weakening the collective resolve of the Dene Tha' people or at least their belief that positive changes are possible here. Many of the young people in this study did express that they have no role in the decisions that are affecting their lives here and many believe that "For something to get changed around here you have to wait for a long time" (R. 17).

Where Hope Remains

There is some hope for the young people in Chateh, however, because the Dene Tha' leadership is concerned about the future of this generation. They asked for this research to be conducted because they want to understand how their young people are being affected by the changes that are occurring. There is also hope

because the young people still have memories of a time when things here were different. They remember having opportunities to go hunting, fishing, and camping here with family and friends, and they remember being able to eat wild game without fear of contamination. They also remember a time when their culture provided them with a connection to their past and direction for the future. Although unable to take concrete steps to rebuild their lives at this time, they do want an end to the feuding, the fighting, and the alcohol and drug addictions, and other symptoms of distress. They have identified actions such as regaining respect for their Elders, their land, and each other, and rebuilding their community by cutting the grass, erasing the graffiti, tearing down all the old buildings, and building new homes that would improve the lives of people here. They talk about the need to reopen the youth centre, develop some parks, reopen the grocery store, and have cultural and recreational activities so that people can start doing things together again, as they remember that the people here once did.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with the body of literature related to sense of place and place attachment but it also offers new insights into the ways that environmental changes are having social and cultural impacts for First Nations people in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta. The findings suggest that the Dene Tha' people are being gradually displaced by industrial activities, that their homeland can no longer sustain them or their culture, and that many of the young people no longer want to remain living here. The following chapter of this thesis

will examine the significance of the study and the policy implications of the findings as well as offer some recommendations for further research.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This final chapter contains a summary of the study and discussion of the significant findings of this research. The implications for practice on community, provincial, and federal levels are also examined. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and closing remarks.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the impacts of industrial development on First Nations people living in the Treaty 8 Region of northern Alberta. This research describes how these impacts are affecting a generation of Dene Tha' people whose community is now surrounded by agriculture, oil and gas wells, pipelines, roads and seismic lines, electrical installations, cut blocks, and other forms of industrial activity. Although industrial development has occurred in the traditional territory of the Dene Tha' for decades, these activities now dominate the landscape and are altering the lives and the future of the people who call this place home.

The background chapter provides the necessary context for understanding the present day impacts of development. The historical accounts, beginning with the arrival of the first European and including the expansion of settlement and escalation of resource extraction activities, demonstrate that a continuous series of actions, events, and political decisions have shaped the lives of the people who live in this region. It is within this historical context that the participants of this study were born. Although each generation must re-interpret its place in the world

based on an understanding of the past, each generation is also bounded by the lived reality of the present (Rotenberg, 1993). For the young people in this study their lived reality of the present involves coping with the tremendous changes in their socio-physical environment that have and are occurring within their lifetime.

In order to understand how these changes are affecting their lives and their future, place attachment and disruption in place attachment theories were applied in this research. Brown and Perkins' (1992) disruption in place attachment framework served as a guide to describe how the sense of place and place attachments of young adults in this Dene Tha' community, have been altered by the slow deterioration of their environment and how they and their community are responding and coping with the disruptions. The disruption process involves a pre-disruption phase in which attachments are formed; a disruption phase, marked by a loss of attachment and related stress; and a post-disruption or recovery phase, in which people begin to cope with their lost attachments, attempt to establish new attachments, and start to rebuild their lives.

A qualitative approach was taken in this research project because this method allowed for more in-depth understanding of the lived experience in this setting. Prior to this study there had been no Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) (Alberta Environment, 2009) or other research initiatives that have identified the effects of industrial development being experienced in Chateh, Alberta because government regulations did not require impact assessments (Alberta Environment, 2008). The 20 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, who volunteered to participate in this study, were interviewed using

open-ended questions in order to examine the social and cultural impacts of these activities. The interview questions were designed to explore the processes involved in place attachment and their form, function, and meaning and to enable the participants to reflect on and express their understanding of the changes that are occurring, thereby addressing the following three research questions:

1. How did the young adults develop their sense of place and what does their place mean to them? (Pre-disruption phase)
2. What transformations in people, place, and processes are they experiencing? (Disruption phase)
3. How are these transformations changing the way the young adults understand and experience their place and their future? (Post-disruption phase)

The data gathered during the interviews was coded and recoded to identify major and minor themes and to highlight unusual insights. The information gathered was then presented to the participants and the community for confirmation and validation before it was analyzed using the disruption in place attachment framework and place attachment theories. Triangulation was accomplished by comparing the interview data with secondary sources such as historical information, government documents, newspaper articles, and other related research reports.

Discussion of the Significant Findings

The findings in this study reflect the experiences and understandings of a group of young adults born between 1982 and 1989, who live in Chateh on the Hay Lake reserve #209 in northwestern Alberta. Their adult recollections of

childhood places provide knowledge about not only how and under what circumstance they developed their emotional bond with their place but also its meaning. All meanings are, as Rotenberg (1993) has argued, shaped by the broader social, economic, and political conditions of the time period in which they are formed and reflect the lived reality of day-to-day life in a place. In other words meanings are context dependant; therefore, to be fully understood meanings must be seen as "either changed or unchanged from some earlier understanding" (p. xiv). In this study, childhood place experiences provide the necessary starting point for exploring environmental, social, and cultural change and addressing the three questions that guided this research.

Research Question One

How did the young adults develop their sense of place and what does their place mean to them? (Pre-disruption phase)

The findings of research question one indicate that the participants developed their sense of place through their personal experiences and their childhood interactions with the natural environment helped shape their values, beliefs, and identity. This finding is consistent with the literature on place attachment which states that childhood environmental experiences have a profound influence on people and their emotional bond with places (Eisenhauer et al., 2000; Kitchen, 1992; Marcus, 1992; Piaget, 1954; Riley, 1992; Sebba, 1991; Tolman, 1948). The land, although already altered by forestry and oil and gas activities, still provided them opportunities to hunt, fish, and trap in their traditional territory and enabled them to experience to some degree the traditional

way of life that is part of their heritage as Dene Tha' people. They grew up learning traditional skills because these activities were embedded in their daily lives and were reinforced and maintained through the cultural practices and traditions of Elders and the community as a whole. As noted in the literature, culture plays a major role in formation and maintenance of place attachments (Agnew & Duncan, 1989; Brandenburg & Carroll, 1995; Erickson, 1976; Low, 1992; Riley, 1992; Rotenberg, 1993; Shamai, 1991).

Although the quality of the natural environment and the traditions of their culture had significant influence on the place attachments of the participants, it was their social relationships that gave place meaning. Their place memories were all memories of shared experiences and throughout their accounts places acted as markers for remembering the times they shared with family and friends. All of their place experiences and all of their place memories had a social dimension. Places, as Altman and Low (1992) have suggested, appear to provide "contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur and it is to those social relationships . . . to which people are attached" (p. 7).

This study demonstrates that the young Dene Tha' adults are attached to the social relationships that they experienced in their place and their place provided the context for these relationships. They developed a deep sense of belonging here because of their interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships. Their meanings and memories of place reflect the significance of those social relationships in their lives.

Research Question Two

What transformations in people, place, and processes are they experiencing? (Disruption phase)

The importance of the social dimensions of place is also evident in how the participants understand the transformations in people, places, and processes that they are experiencing. The findings of research question two suggest that the gradual deterioration of the physical environment is resulting in a slow progressive deterioration in the interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships in Chateh. The young people spoke about the loss of access to and destruction of places that had special meaning to them. They talked about the possible contamination of their food source and their environment. They also described their loss of culture, traditions, and once commonly held values and beliefs. However, it was the isolation, alienation, and loss of positive social relationships that appeared to have impacted them the most. The literature on place attachment does make a connection between the physical aspects of place, human relationships, and place attachments (Altman & Low, 1992; Eisenhauer et al., 2000; Hufford, 1992; Marcus 1992; Riley, 1992; Stedman, 2003; Relph, 2007; Sebba, 1991). Furthermore, the disruption in place attachment literature does recognize that abrupt changes in the physical environment resulting from man-made and natural disasters (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Erickson, 1976, 1994; Oliver-Smith, 1986) and forced relocations can have profound negative impacts on the social functioning of communities (Loney, 1995; Press, 1995; Usher, P. et al., 1979; Waldram, 1988; Wheatley, 1997; Windsor & McVey, 2005).

Little is documented, however, about how impacts are experienced when environmental deterioration occurs over a prolonged period of time. The findings of this research suggest that when the physical environment is gradually altered it is accompanied by gradual changes in people's social relationships and cultural practices. These social and cultural changes alter place meanings and attachments and interfere with people's ability to relate to one another and support each other in adjusting to the changes.

Research Question Three

How are these transformations changing the way the young adults understand and experience their place and their future? (Post-disruption phase)

The results of research question three indicate that the transformations in the socio-physical environment have altered the context of life in Chateh. The land, the people, the way of life, and the way people live together here have changed. The increasing industrial development in the region is gradually displacing the Dene Tha' people and the land is becoming increasingly unable to sustain them or their culture. Their future here is uncertain and beyond their influence.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the young people have not entered a post-disruption or recovery phase because the deterioration of their physical environment is ongoing, cumulative, and outside their control. There has been no recognition from authority figures of the value of the losses they are experiencing. Furthermore, there are few opportunities to adjust to the changes or

to hang on to the traditions, places, values, and beliefs that are a part of who they are.

At the same time many of the participants recognize that the social relationships that gave meaning to their life and their place are increasingly being eroded. The symptoms of collective trauma, loss of social infrastructure, and lack of educational, housing, and employment opportunities within the community are further limiting their ability to maintain social relationships or develop new meaning and valued experiences here. Many of the young people that were interviewed feel that the place they knew when they were younger no longer exists and they no longer belong here because "everything [has] changed" (R. 6).

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have several important implications for practice. Clearly life in Chateh is under great strain due to pressing environmental, social, and economic transformations. Moreover, the situation will likely worsen as the population increases over time, the socio-physical environment continues to deteriorate, and the decisions that impact the lives of the people remain beyond their control. At present, almost 45 percent of the population in Chateh is under the age of 25. The largest cohort is the 10-14 year olds and the second largest group is made up of young people who are 15 to 19 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2007). The region is being exploited for its forests products, oil and gas reserves, and mineral deposits. The area is also in the path of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project and most recently it is being considered for oil shale development and as a site for nuclear power production. This research,

therefore, confirms the concerns of the Dene Tha' leadership about the future of their young people and it highlights the urgent need to take corrective action to address the issue.

How can the young people of Chateh begin to rebuild their lives here? Disruption in place attachment literature suggests that the first critical step in the recovery process is acknowledgement by authority figures of the value of the losses being experienced. Brown and Perkins (1992) have argued that without this acknowledgement, recovery is hindered and the victims are further marginalized as they are forced to cope with their losses without assistance.

This research project can be seen as a starting point in the recovery process for the Dene Tha' because this research documents for the first time the changes that are being experienced by the young people who are actually living with the changes and it offers an opportunity for open discussion of the problem at a local level. To be effective this discussion must engage all community members, especially the young people, in determining their future and enable people to develop concrete action plans to achieve that future. Youth engagement is essential for the recovery process and their cultural survival. The recent *Task Force on Aboriginal Language and Culture* (2005) urged First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people to

> Go home to [their] communities and do not forget the youth. They sometimes get forgotten and shouldn't be. They're important and they're the next generation. We need to ask the youth what they need and want, and get them involved and get them excited about [cultural revival]. (p. 32)

The issue is complex and recovery will involve mobilizing all the human resources within Chateh so that everyone can gain a sense of individual and collective control over their lives and begin to focus on what they can do to rebuild the social and cultural fabric of their community.

Acknowledgement is also necessary at a provincial government level. The findings of this study should alert provincial authorities to the need for a comprehensive Cumulative Effects Assessment in the region that focuses on the connection between environmental change and social and cultural consequences. This study should also trigger the implementation of an intensive Environmental Monitoring program to address the human health and food security issues that have been identified. Furthermore, if the Alberta governments' Land-Use Framework is to achieve its goal of protecting the environment and ensuring the economic and social wellbeing of people in the province, this research indicates that land use plans will need to address local place-based issues, the deteriorating environmental conditions, and the economic and social disparities that already exist. Moreover, there should be mechanisms built into the land use plan that automatically include remedial action when any environmental disturbance occurs and local residents need to be encouraged to alert authorities when environmental changes are recognized. A more balanced development approach is also needed to ensure that the costs and benefits of industrial activities are fully considered and understood before land use decisions are made.

Finally, there needs to be acknowledgement at the federal level of the value of the losses being experienced by the people in Chateh. This research

indicates, therefore, that there is a need for the Government of Canada to review its fiduciary responsibilities to the Dene Tha' people. The federal government has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by engaging the community and all levels of government, in open discussions about the need to revise the Indian Act and the reserve system and make them more responsive to the changing needs of communities. Discussions should also include and address community concerns about education, employment, health, housing, food security, and safety. The findings of this study also indicate that there is a need to recognize the critical importance of social infrastructure and to assist the community in developing opportunities for positive social interactions. At present the federal government does not provide funding or support for recreational programming on reserves and a review of that policy is warranted.

Recommendations for Future Research

As follow up, the Dene Tha' First Nation may consider working collaboratively with future researchers to develop a longitudinal study to track the life course of the participants and other members of this age cohort and document the long term impacts of disruption in their place attachments. Migration studies may give an indication of whether the disruption in place attachment and lack of opportunities in Chateh prompts the young people to temporarily or permanently leave their community and the factors that influence that decision. Dietary and health studies may also shed additional light on the long term effects of the deteriorating environmental conditions and habitat changes that have been reported by the participants. The Dene Tha' may also choose to use subsequent

studies to monitor and assess the effectiveness of community and government initiatives undertaken to address the issues identified in this research project.

It may also be beneficial to conduct similar studies with other age cohorts within the community. Although the participants in this study were unable to identify specifically what occurred, several young adults did suggest that the changes started to become evident about 10 to 15 years ago, which indicates that a threshold of disturbance may have been reached. Interviews with people over the age of 25 may provide additional information about the nature of that threshold. This knowledge could be used to develop prevention and intervention strategies in the future.

Place attachment studies with children, adolescents, teenagers, older adults, and Elders in Chateh may also give new insights into how different generations who have different childhood experiences because of environmental, social, and cultural change view place differently within the same community. Research in this area may be able to answer questions such as:

1. Do social relationships have a similar influence on place attachments for people with different childhood experiences within the same community?
2. Does each generation experience displacement in a historical context or is displacement personally experienced as changes within an individual's lifetime?
3. Do people experience changes to their socio-physical environment differently at different stages in their life (childhood, adolescence, young

adulthood, older adulthood, and senior years) and are there additional factors that influence their place attachments and social relationships?

4. Are there generational differences in peoples' tolerance for environmental change and does this affect a community's ability to collectively respond to and recover from the slow progressive deterioration of their environment?

Answers to these questions may indicate that Environmental Impact Assessments and Cumulative Effects Assessments should consider demographics and the environmental, social, and cultural impacts on different age categories within a population, along with the possible long term effects of these impacts on each cohort.

Researchers may also want to duplicate this study in other comparison communities within the region such as Rainbow Lake, a non-Aboriginal community with similar population size and geographic isolation. A study of this nature would perhaps identify community and cultural characteristics that serve to buffer or exaggerate the effects of environmental change and tease out the influence of social and economic policies on adaptability and response to disruptions. Comparison studies with young adults in the other Dene Tha' communities at Meander and Bushe River as well as other Aboriginal communities in northern Alberta, may also provide additional information about the factors that contribute to the social functioning of communities and the sense of place of their residents.

Finally, it may be beneficial for researchers to further explore the consequences of slow environmental deterioration by applying community disaster theories and literature related to the effects of disasters on place attachment and human health. Although the gradual and progressive deterioration of the environment does not have the suddenness that earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis have, this study indicates that there are similarities in human effects and responses. I suggest, therefore, that the multidisciplinary work of researchers such as Albrecht (2005, 2007), Higginbotham et al. (2006), Tootle (2007), and others could be applied in case studies of communities in northern Alberta that are also experiencing increasing industrial pressure.

Closing Remarks: So Why Should It Matter?

What happens to the young people in Chateh of course matters a great deal to the Dene Tha' but it should also matter a great deal to the rest of our society. In his classic work *The Sociological Imagination,* C.W. Mills (1959) wrote that:

> [n]owadays men often feel that their private lives are a series of traps. They sense that within their everyday worlds, they cannot overcome their troubles, and in this feeling, they are often quite correct. What ordinary men are directly aware of and what they try to do are bounded by the private orbits in which they live; their visions and their powers are limited to the close-up scenes of job, family, neighborhood; in other milieux, they move vicariously and remain spectators. And the more aware they become, however vaguely, of ambitions and of threats which transcend their immediate locales, the more trapped they seem to feel. (p. 3)

Ordinary people become so focused on their own everyday struggles that they "cannot grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self

and the world" (p. 4). They often consider their struggles as their private or personal troubles; however, Mills draws a definite distinction between *personal troubles* and *society issues*. To Mills, personal troubles involve threats to personal values and " . . . personal troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware" (p. 8). Conversely, society issues are much broader, more encompassing, and outside the control of ordinary people. In reality they involve "the structural failure of economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals" (p. 9). Indifference about the values and plight of individuals within a society and the collapse of a society's opportunity and social structures threatens not only individuals but the complete society.

If what is being experienced by the young adults in Chateh and the Dene Tha' people is seen as somehow separate from what is happening to our society as a whole then we are failing to recognize that they are a part of our society in Alberta and the rest of Canada. Perhaps it is best to view the Dene Tha' experience as an indicator of what may be the future of any community that is located in an area where natural resource development or other changes to the landscape have impacts on the sense of place of the people who live there. They may well be our "canaries in the coal mine". As our population increases and the natural resources of Alberta, Canada, and the world become more limited and

more economically important, the value and the significance of places to ordinary people will no doubt increasingly be put in jeopardy.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Research Agreement

Research Agreement

The Research Agreement hereinafter known as **"Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN) Research Agreement"** made this 25th day of July in the year of 2008.

BETWEEN

Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)
OF THE FIRST PART

AND

Tera Spyce / Brenda Parlee (Supervisor)
OF THE SECOND PART
hereinafter, referred to as the "**Researcher.**"

Whereas the **Researcher** (Tera Spyce under the supervision of Dr. Brenda Parlee) is carrying out this research project as part of the requirements of a Master's degree from the Department of Rural Economy, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Alberta, and as part of these requirements, and subject to the terms set out in part 1-8 of this Agreement, the results will be included in the following public documents:

a) A Master's Thesis;
b) Academic and other publications and presentations or any other product resulting from this research in any media form and;

Whereas the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and the **Researcher** agree to undertake a Research Project concerning the cumulative effects of resource development on the well-being of Dene Tha First Nation members as defined by the research proposal submitted and approved by the **DTFN** on June 5 (attached). This research project is hereinafter described as the "Research Project".

THIS AGREEMENT NOW WITNESSES, THEREFORE, that the parties agree to the following:

1. The purpose of this Research Project, as discussed and understood by the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and the **Researcher** is to document how resource development (forestry, oil and gas exploration and development, tourism, agriculture) is affecting Aboriginal peoples in the region. .

2. The scope of the Research Project, as discussed with and understood by the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** relates to the cumulative effects of development on peoples 'attachment to place', however, may include knowledge related to land use and harvesting, traditional knowledge and management practices.

3. Methods to be used, as agreed by the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and the **Researcher** include:
   a) Interviews, discussion groups, and workshops with community members willing to participate in the study as defined by the consent form (forthcoming).
   b) Meetings with the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and other individual / agencies with an interest in the research

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4. Capacity building and community participation, as agreed, is to include:

    a) Employment and "training" of a community research assistant;
    b) Community participation through interviews and workshops;
    c) Communication and knowledge sharing with **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)**;

5. Ethics:
    - This Research Project and Agreement will be submitted to, and approved by, the University of Alberta, Agriculture and Forestry Ethics Committee. The Researcher will adhere to the recommendations of the Ethics Committee as well as the "Tri-Council Policy Statement of Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans."

6. Interviews and Informed Consent:
    a) Interview
    - The interview process will be relaxed and open-ended;
    - Questions/guiding statements will be used to facilitate the interview. These questions/guiding statements may be adapted by the DTFN or the Researcher in order to focus the interview on information that is needed to meet the goals and objectives of the study;
    - The person being interviewed will be encouraged to speak in the language in which they feel most comfortable, either in their indigenous language or English;
    - Should they choose their indigenous language, a translator the participant is comfortable with will be required;
    - The interview will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to the person being interviewed, and at the location of their choosing.

    b) Consent to Conduct Interview:
    - Prior to interviews being conducted interviewees will be asked if they wish to take part in the project;
    - A Research Summary and Consent Form (Appendix B) will be presented to the interviewee(s) to ensure that they are aware of the nature of the Research Project;
    - If the interviewee does not want to participate in the Research Project and Interview Process, the interview will not take place.

    c) Consent to use Results of Interview in Thesis and other Publications:
    - Verbal or written consent to use the interview results in a publication will also be obtained from the interviewee;
    - Where verbal or written consent to use the interview results in publication is given, the **Researcher** will ensure that the interviews are acknowledged by name in all material or public statements generated from the information collected. Where written consent to use the research results in publication is NOT given, the **Researcher** will ensure that any material or public statements generated from the information collected from the participant does NOT contain statements or quotes which are attributable to the interviewee and that names of interviewee does not appear in the material.

    d) The **Researcher** will verify interview results (present the results back to the interviewee) within 6 weeks of the interview to ensure that the information is accurate.

7. Information collected is to be shared, distributed and stored in the agreed ways:

a) Raw data (results interviews and workshops, audio and video tape) gathered for the purposes of the Research Project will be made available through the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)**. Copies of all raw data including but not being limited to audio and video tape and written notes will be deposited with the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)**;
b) Should any of the research material from this project be used or made available for use in future for the purposes of and production of any publications or videos or any media format, then the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** will be contacted prior to any project beginning to enlist their involvement in same;
c) Activity reports and summaries of results of the Research Project will be presented to the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** twice yearly beginning August 1, 2007 until March 31, 2008.
d) A final project report will be developed for the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** before December 31, 2008.

8. Communication regarding the project with all other parties (including the Sustainable Forestry Management Network - SFMN) will be handled in these agreed ways:
   a) All reports of the Research Project (including publications and presentations) will be *reviewed* by the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** or their representatives before being distributed to other parties;
   b) The Researcher will fully acknowledge the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and interviewees involved in the Research Project (depending on consent as discussed in part 5).
   c) A poster for each community will be prepared summarizing the goals and findings of the study. A one-page summary of the goals and results of the project will be provided to all participants.

9. In the event that the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** has reason to believe that the terms and conditions of this Agreement are not being met by the Researcher, they may terminate this agreement and the Research Project upon giving such period of notice as the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** deems appropriate.

10. In the event that this Agreement is terminated, in accordance with part 8 or part 15, the Researcher shall return all originals and copies of raw data, including video, audio and written materials collected or prepared for the purposes of the Research Project to **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)**.

11. The Researcher has acquired funding and other forms of support for this Research Project from the Sustainable Forest Management Network who has imposed the following criteria and reporting responsibilities on the Researcher:
    a) March 31, 2008 – Report

12. The **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** agrees to:
    a) Participate in and support the project (workshop discussions, feedback on project and information gathered) and;
    b) Review any reports and materials intended for public communication and distribution;
    c) Support the Researcher in gathering information as set out in parts 1-6.

13. The Researcher undertakes to:

a) Proceed with Research Project according to the goals and objectives set out in the proposal (See Appendix A) and according to the terms and conditions set of in this Agreement;
b) Work under the direction of the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** and Steering Committee if one is formed;
c) Act as a resource person with respect to the Research Project and its topic.

14. The Researcher agrees to stop the Research Project under the following conditions:
a) By consensus decision of the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)**;
b) If the Researcher is not able to adhere to the terms and conditions of this agreement;
c) If the **Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)** terminates the Researcher pursuant to part 9.

_____ Date: July 9/07
Dene Tha First Nation (DTFN)

Mrs. Tera Spyce Date: July 16/07
Researcher
Tera Spyce

_____ Date: July 16/07
Research (Supervisor)
Dr. Brenda Parlee

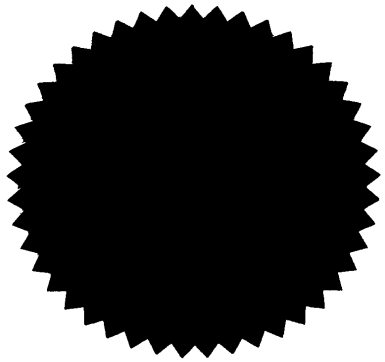
Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics
Human Research Ethics Board
Approval

is hereby granted to:

Brenda Parlee, Principal Investigator for

07-40 The Importance of Place to Dene Tha First Nation

for a term of one year, provided there is no change in experimental procedures. Any changes in experimental procedures must be submitted in writing to the AFHE REB.



Granted on September 26th, 2007

for Walter Dixon, Chair, AFHE REB

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. When were you born and where? Have you lived here your whole life?
2. What was it like growing up here during that time?
3. When you speak of the land what does that mean to you?
4. Are there places here that have special meaning to you? Can you tell me about them?
5. Have you noticed any changes taking place on the land? Can you tell me about them?
6. How do feel about these changes?
7. How are these changes being managed and by whom?
8. How do you spend your time now?
9. How would you like to be spending your time?
10. What changes have you noticed taking place in your community?
11. How would you describe Chateh to someone who had never been here?
12. If you could live anywhere in the world where you like to live?
13. Where do you live now? Could you get a home of your own here?
14. Are you related to most people here? Is it difficult to find a life partner or someone to date in Chateh?
15. If you could have one wish for your community what would you wish for?
16. If you could have one wish for yourself what would you wish for?
17. If you were Chief for the day what would you do?
18. Do you have any other comments or ideas that you would like to add?

Appendix C: Summary of Findings

Community Input Presentation

This partnership project is about place, changes to place, and the social and cultural consequences of these changes. It also looks at the changes that the young adults in Chateh would like to see in the future.

Place is about:

1. location – where we are on the map, where we are in relation to other people and places
2. locale – the setting of our everyday lives
3. sense of place – our experiences and the feelings we have about where we live

Our key questions:

1. How do young adults in Chateh feel about where they live?
2. How have they seen things change?
3. How would they like to see things change in the future?

Who participated in the interviews?

- 20 young adults in Chateh – 18-25 years old (Born between 1982 and 1989)
- 11 females and 9 males
- Almost half (45%) were either employed full-time or had summer jobs
- Three had completed high school
- Two participants had children
- All but one lived with their parents or other relatives

What We Heard

1. How do young adults in Chateh feel about where they live?

Specific questions asked:
What was it like growing up here?
Are there places here that have special meaning to you?

A. All of the participants talked about learning about their place through their experiences. Their memories of place were centered on learning traditional ways through outdoor activities with family and friends.
B. They had special people in their lives (extended family and grandparents) who taught them about place and important life skills.
C. Childhood memories included lessons learned from Elders and they all talked about the importance of Elders who acted as spiritual, cultural, and moral guides; taught the rules of Dene life; passed on tradition through oral stories; and organized Tea Dances and community gatherings.

D. The places that had special meaning to them were: the old school, the youth centre, the arena, the church, the graveyard, and Habay. They had fond memories of participating in organized activities and field trips outside of Chateh.
E. Overall their memories were about family and friends and learning and doing things together.

2. How have they seen things change?

Specific questions asked:
When you speak of "the land" what does that mean to you?
What changes have you noticed taking place on the land?
What changes are taking place in the community?

Changes to the land:

A. For some the land is a link to their ancestors but few are certain about what and where Dene Tha' land is now.
B. The changes on the land that concern them are: large oil and gas development (amount & closeness to homes); less or sick animals; less plants-more forestry; dust in town-more traffic and noise; effects of climate change.
C. They are concerned about the loss of habitat and the loss of wild animals.
D. They are concerned about the possible contamination of wildlife that may be making it unsafe to continue to practice traditional ways and to eat their traditional foods.

Changes taking place in the community:

A. *"Our culture is slowly fading away".* Fewer people are hunting, fishing, and camping and you have to travel further to hunt now. There are more people now - especially more children.
B. Many spoke of the passing on of Elders and family members and they felt the loss of spiritual and cultural rituals, knowledge, and traditions with each passing.
C. They were concerned about the loss of common beliefs and values and felt there is now disrespect for Elders, the land, and each other.
D. They said that people aren't friendly to each other anymore and many spoke of withdrawing and staying away from other people.
E. All the young adults talked about the loss of community services, businesses, and recreation/social/cultural activities and signs of community decline.
F. They also expressed concern about what they feel are increasing signs of distress (violence, bullying, feuds, vandalism, suicides, accidental deaths, alcohol & drug use).

3. How would they like to see things change in the future?

Specific questions asked:
If you were Chief for the day what would you do?
If you could have one wish for your community what would you wish for?

If I was Chief what would I do?

A Heal the alcohol and drug addictions
B. Restore: community harmony, cultural traditions and practices, respect for Elders, the land, and each other
C. Regain: lost services, social/recreational/cultural activities, community pride
D. Renew: cultural, spiritual and religious guidance

What do they wish for?

A. Healthy and happy family, friends and community
B. A safe and friendly place to live and raise children
C. Continuation of their culture and traditions
D. To hunt, fish, and spend time on the land together
E. Available and safe country food
F. To continue their education in their community and have local employment opportunities and better housing
G. In summary, what the young adults said is that they want local community action on community issues. They want social and recreational opportunities and a safe place to live, work and play – a community they can take pride in.
H. In short, they want to build community. They want to regain control starting with the place they call home. Rather than just respond and adapt to change they want to create and be a part of positive change.

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Appendix D: Summary of Community Input Meeting

Open-house
May 27, 2008
Chateh, Alberta

This project is a partnership project between the Dene Tha' First Nation and the University of Alberta. The Dene Tha' leadership wants to understand how forestry and oil and gas activities might be affecting the Dene Tha' people. They are especially concerned about the young adults living in Chateh.

Last summer I came and lived in Chateh for two months and worked with the Dene Tha' Steering Committee on this project. Together we developed some questions to ask the young people.

Twenty young adults volunteered to be part of the project and gave us their ideas and feelings about the following set of questions:

4. What was it like growing up here?
5. How have you seen things change on the land and in the community?
6. How would you like to see things change in the future?

On May 26, 2008 a summary of what the young adults said was presented at the Dene Tha' Council meeting in Meander River. The following day we had an open-house in Chateh.

The open-house was held to share the results with the community of Chateh. It was also a time to ask community members, who did not take part in the project, their views about things that are changing on the land and in their community and their wishes for the future. 32 people came, had lunch, and talked about their ideas.

Posters were hung on the walls and people were asked to add their thoughts about the changes they noticed and what they would like to see happen in the future. This is what they said.

Changes to the land:

- There are a lot of logs in the river this year
- Lots of changes on the land – more clear cutting
- Vegetation around the lake is smaller this year and it doesn't look as healthy as it used to. It is paler and the color is changing - it is reddish.
- Trees are missing
- Less wildlife

- Lots of high water and flooding all over because the trees are gone
- Traplines are damaged
- There is no trapping because there is no wildlife
- Animals are deformed, sick, and all gone
- Sour gas – you can smell it – it is keeping the wildlife away
- Water is not safe for even the animals – not even the snow
- Dead animals everywhere (dead deer and dead dogs in the community)
- They are disguising the trees they cut – when you go off the road and look behind the trees near the road you see all the trees gone. Do they replace or replant them? It is still bare even years after they cut.
- More garbage everywhere
- Higher water line – higher water table
- Less biodiversity – fewer species of everything including trees, plants, and animals
- Buffalo are social animals and to hunt them is wrong – they come right into the community to be around people
- Moose is our traditional food not the buffalo and moose don't want to be near buffalo so now we have lots of buffalo but the moose are gone – we don't eat buffalo – we eat moose

Changes taking place in the community:

- We're going to see more suicides because young people don't have what they need for the future
- We've lost our respect and identity
- Loss of Elders wisdom and culture
- Not knowing who you are
- Isolation
- Alcohol and drugs
- Self-respect is gone because we are always being put down
- The people who went to residential school lost their identity and now they have to raise families without it – that is why there is such a high level of dysfunction
- People change but some never do
- More people have cancer now
- There are more birth defects
- We have no emergency plan – I have never heard of one
- There's more confusion now about what is the role of Aboriginal people in the rest of society
- Community breakdown
- People need information but there is an information breakdown between the band and the people and the community and the outside world
- Kids are chasing horses and buffalo with the quads
- Kids don't wear helmets or protective gear
- Oil wells everywhere
- Lots of violence

- I hate quads – too much noise – too dangerous, people don't know how to drive them safely

How would they like to see things change in the future?

- Cleaner community
- Fix the roads
- More support from the band members for the youth
- Bike and running trails
- Must be the whole community to work together to make changes
- Organize rabbit snaring and other group cultural things for the community
- Everybody is family in this community – we need to remember that – people have forgotten that
- When everybody is sober it is the best community in the world
- Believe in one another
- Make it a dry reserve – make people who drink do community service or get fined
- Have a place to have a cultural retreat so people can go there to re-new, reflect, and verify themselves and their culture and renew their connection between themselves and the creator
- More activities for youth
- Get a MacDonald's, Tim Horton's, Subway – places to go
- Build new playgrounds, new basketball courts, new skating rink
- Build sidewalks and paved roads
- More news – new people
- Take people out in the bush for camping, hunting, and cook outs etc.
- Enjoy the company of one another
- Help one another
- Have a theatre or dj – music, dancing, social things
- Make a road around the hill – that road is scary with buffalo, horses, and hitch hikers
- Need activities to keep kids busy and out of trouble
- Have a bingo hall

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